Motivations and Social Conventions of Online Video

Game Play among Young Adult Males

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Faculty of Human Ecology, Department of Family Social Sciences

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

Abstract

This study sought to understand: Why do young men play online games? How are the social aspects of the online gaming community governed? How is this virtual gaming world connected to the real world? The study explored the motivations and social conventions in online first person shooter games, and how they impact each other. As well, this study examined the relationship between this virtual world and the real physical world.

A group of six young males between the ages of 18-30 years shared, in-depth, their opinions during individual interviews and a focus group discussion. First hand data were observed and collected during live online video gaming sessions. The data were coded and sorted according to themes in order to identify coding groups. The data revealed several motivating factors to play online first person shooter games, which are discussed in detail. As well, the research provided a better understanding of the social conventions in the online gaming community and how motivating factors and social conventions influence and impact one another. Many different ways in which this virtual environment is connected to the real world were discovered and many different factors can carry over into real life, such as relationships and money.

Acknowledgments

 I would like to take this opportunity to thank my advisor Dr. Javier Mignone (University of Manitoba), who has been very influential in my academic career path, always supportive of this thesis project, and provided excellent guidance and encouragement throughout the entire process of completing my Master's Degree.

I would also like to thank the other members of my advisory committee Dr. Karen Duncan (University of Manitoba) and Dr. Bob Travica (University of Manitoba) for their patience, expertise, and support of this thesis research project.

Another big thank you goes to the Government of Manitoba, which provided funds for this research project, through the Manitoba Graduate Scholarship (MGS). I appreciate the financial support and belief in my research.

A special thank you to the participants of this research study, who made this project a success. I appreciate all the time you committed to this study.

Dedication

This research paper is dedicated to the amazing people in my life who have stood by my side during this wonderful, yet very time-consuming adventure! To my fabulous parents Ronald and Valerie, who have always supported my academic goals and encouraged me to succeed. To my loving husband, Chris who has been super supportive of my path to higher education and made many sacrifices over the years so that I could achieve this major goal in my life!! To my fantastic children, Kaiden and Nolan who are the driving force behind everything I do and have been extremely understanding when "Mom has to do homework." Thank you all and I look forward to the celebrations!!

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Chapter One - Introduction

Background

Video games have existed and been enjoyed by many people for decades. The first video games, like Pong, were very simplistic and found in public venues, such as bars and arcades. Over the years, several technological advances have allowed for major evolutions in the video gaming industry. Some examples are that video games now have 3D capabilities, options to play live with other people around the world, options for "modding" or customization of the original game, handheld game systems, and the ability to game without using any controllers. (Note: There is a glossary of terms in Appendix A.) Over this same time period, there has also been a significant increase in video game play. A gamer is defined by the NPD Group as a "person who has played computer or video games in the last four weeks" (as cited in ESAC, 2011). The Entertainment Software Association of Canada (ESAC)[1] reports that 59% of Canadians are gamers (2011), with similar numbers in subsequent years – 58% (2012; 2013). In 2011, Canada had a population of approximately 33.4 million people (Statistics Canada, 2011). This would mean that approximately 19.7 million of these people play video games.[2] According to the Entertainment Software Industry (2011), 72% of American households play computer or video games. Ninety-five percent of Canadian households own a computer, while 61% of Canadian households own at least one video game console (ESAC, 2013).

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[1] There is a list of commonly used acronyms in Appendix B.

[2] Disclaimer: This information is based on the best available data at the time; there may be limitations that the researcher is not aware of.

People's video gaming options have expanded, as the genres of games steadily increase with new technological developments. Individuals can now partake in a variety of gaming experiences, such as exercise programs, interactive sports games, singing and dancing, fantasy and role playing, shooting, driving, puzzles, simulations, and fighting. They can chat online with other people during game play, either verbally or by instant messages. People can build a friend list to play with online, play online private games, and create new modified versions of the original games. Online game play appeals to a large number of people, as 76% of Canadian gamers play online (ESAC, 2010). This means that approximately 15 million Canadians play video games online.[3] Online gaming involves playing video games using an Internet network connection (Game Mile, 2012). There are an endless number of options to suit the diverse preferences of all kinds of people. There are people of both genders and in all age categories who enjoy playing video games, as shown in Table 1 below. These data were drawn from a total sample size of 4,183 people in Canada, with 2,969 adults, 527 teens (13-17 years), and 687 kids (6-12 years).

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[3] Disclaimer: This information is based on the best available data at the time; there may be limitations that the researcher is not aware of.

Table 1 Breakdown on Video Game Play by Age & Gender, 2012		
	Play a Few Days/ Week (Percent)	Play Everyday (Percent)
6-12 years old		
Male	48	41
Female	58	17
13-17 years old		
Male	35	54
Female	49	20
18-34 years old		
Male	49	—
Female	45	—
35-54 years old		
Male	46	—
Female	38	32
55+ years old		
Male	41	32
Female	41	32

Data Source: ESAC, 2012

Since video game technology has been advancing and changing, the dynamics of the video gamer have also changed. In order for studies about gamers to be current and relevant, the research topics and tools need to be adapted to better suit the dynamics of these people. A research study that captures gamers in their naturalistic environment would provide valuable insight into this dynamic environment and would provide a more realistic view of who the gamer is, the types of social interactions they have while gaming, and the impact of other gamers in this environment. As online gaming on a console system is still relatively new, with the first launch in 2002, there are many unknowns about this environment which need further exploration and there is opportunity for many important discoveries to be made. A qualitative study would enable researchers to collect current, in-depth

data about gamers and video game trends, which in turn, would help lead future research in the field.

With all of the available options, it is understandable how video games can appeal to very diverse groups of people and have gained such popularity. Due to the increase in the number of gamers, it is important for researchers to learn what motivates different people to play video games, especially the online games that have been steadily increasing in popularity. Online gaming has become an extremely popular social activity that consumes a lot of people's leisure time. People's loved ones – children or other relatives and friends - are involved in these online games and social communities, so it becomes important to understand and learn about the places and spaces where the important people in our lives spend their time, the types of interactions they are having, and if these interactions relate to or influence the physical world. Learning more about the online gaming community is just the first step in the many stages of future research that can and need to be conducted.

The researcher has had first-hand experience observing several friends and family members who have been very involved in video game play, including both offline and online gaming over the years. As online gaming has increased in popularity, it has become the primary form of gaming for these same people. She noticed that playing video games online had become an important part of her friends' and families' lives, and couldn't help but wonder why. What motivated these individuals to play these online games? She also observed that her friends and

family communicated with other gamers while playing online and it was an integral part of their gaming experience. As an outsider to this online gaming community, the researcher wanted to learn more about this leisure activity that had so much importance to the significant people in her life. She was curious about the social interactions that took place while gaming online, how these interactions are governed in a virtual space through the development of social conventions, and the influence these conventions have on the gamers motivations to play and vice versa. As well, the researcher was interested to know what relationships exist between this online gaming community and the real world.

The research has relevance to the parents, family members, friends, educators, and peers who are linked to these gamers and interact with them on a regular basis. Parents can gain some valuable insight into their children's leisure activities, decide if the environment is appropriate for their children based on their age and developmental level, and be aware of any possible harm that may exist in this environment. Parents, family members, friends, educators, and peers can better relate to the people in their lives if they understand why they are drawn to this leisure activity, possibly interact with them in this setting, or utilize these gamers' motivations to game as a platform to get them engaged in other, similar activities. People ask others how their day at school/work was, what they did at school/work, where a person went with friends the night before, what a person did at the cabin on the weekend, etcetera; now it's time to ask and learn about a very important environment in these gamers' lives. Researchers can gain a better

understanding of the social world in the online gaming community by conducting research to explore these topics further and sharing the information with the general public. The public needs this information, and the importance of these topics merits that it be studied and the findings disseminated appropriately.

There has been a significant amount of research conducted concerning children's and adolescents' gaming; however, video games have grown in popularity among the adult age groups and it is important to learn more about adults' gaming behaviours too. Currently the majority of gamers are male, so studying young adult males will help gain valuable insight among this cohort. To date, many of the research studies have focused on the negative components of gaming, which helps formulate a negative view of video games and the people who play them. It is important for researchers to address other areas of interest in video game research in order to gain a more holistic view of gamers and to better educate the general public about the gaming community. Current video game research should explore current trends in the video game industry, and since online gaming is so popular right now, more research needs to be conducted to explore this unique, virtual environment to see how it operates.

Purpose of Research and Research Questions

Although the online virtual environment is somewhat separate from the physical world in the sense that it only exists through an Internet connection, this research will explore this environment and the relationship it has to the real world. The study was exploratory in nature and focused on learning about the online

gaming community, more specifically what prompts people to play video games online, and once they are playing, what happens within this online social community. The purpose of this study was to describe both the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of young males 18 to 30 years old who play first person shooter (FPS) video games online. Motivation is described as a "process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-directed behaviours" (Cherry, 2012, Definition section, para. 1). According to Cherry (2012), motivation is what causes people to act and explains why a person does something. There are three components to motivation: activation, which is the decision to initiate certain behaviour; persistence, which involves working toward a goal even when obstacles exist; and intensity, which is complete absorption and the drive exerted toward pursuing a goal (Cherry, 2012). These motivational components are present during video game play: deciding to play the video game, proceeding through the game when challenges present themselves, and working towards mastery of various aspects in the game.

Motivation can be extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation originates outside an individual and is often driven by reward, pressure, or products (Oudeyer & Kaplan, 2008). These could include such things as money, social recognition, or praise. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation emanates from within an individual and is carried out for its inherent satisfaction (Oudeyer & Kaplan, 2008). An example of intrinsic motivation is if a person works on a difficult puzzle for hours simply because he or she enjoys solving puzzles. This study will examine both the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of online video game players.

A second purpose of the study was to examine the social aspects of online video gaming, specifically what social conventions and rules exist in this virtual world, how people learn these conventions and what happens if a convention is violated. Social conventions are the arbitrary social rules, standards, or criteria that are accepted and adhered to in a society that dictate people's daily behaviours (Marmor, 2009; Merriam-Webster, 2012; Staudacher, 2010; Wikipedia, 2012.) Some examples of social conventions are appropriately greeting people, turn taking in conversation, and making requests of another person in a congruous manner.

The study sought to contribute to the knowledge gap that exists in the current literature and inform researchers in the field for their future research. As this study has taken a positive approach to learn more about gamers and the gaming community, the researcher hopes to alleviate some of the negative stereotypes that currently encompass the video gaming community. The study sough to understand: Why do people play online games? How are the social aspects of the online gaming community governed? How is this virtual gaming world connected to the real world?

The study focused on the following research questions:

1. What motivates males 18 – 30 years to play online (live) first person shooter (FPS) video games?

2. What are the social conventions among online video gamers?

    i. How do people create and learn these social conventions?

      ii.   What happens if someone 'breaks' a social convention? How does this vary, if at all, with age or gender?

3. How does motivation to play online video games influence the social conventions of the online gaming community?

How do the social conventions of the online gaming community influence gamers' motivations to play online games?

4. What connections exist between this virtual gaming world and the real physical world?

Chapter Two - Literature Review

To date, there has been a significant amount of research conducted about video games. Nonetheless, a lot of this research has focused on the negative aspects of video games, in particular the developmental effects of violence in video gaming (Arriaga, Monteiro, & Esteves, 2011; Bartholow, & Anderson, 2002; Bijvank, 2008; Collier, Liddell, & Liddell, 2008; Cooper & Mackie, 2006; Dietz, 1998; Fleming & Wood, 2001; Funk, Buchman, Jenks, & Bechtoldt, 2003; Gentile, Lynch, Linder, & Walsh, 2004; Graybill, 1985; Irwin, 1995; Ivarsson, Anderson, Akerstedt, & Lindblad, 2013; Sherry, 2006; Uhlmann & Swanson, 2004; Vastag, 2004; Vessey & Lee, 2000) and playing video games excessively (Fisher, 2002; Gentile, 2009; Griffiths & Hunt, 1998; Rehbein, Psych, Kleimann, Mediasci, & Moble, 2010; Salguero & Moran, 2002). Another focus of the research has been concerned with whether video games can be used as an educational tool to engage learners in the school system (Annetta, 2009; Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., 2006; Gower & Mcdowall, 2012; Kafai, 2006; Park, 2012; Rosas et al., 2003; Silvern, 1986).

Gaming Statistics

In order to better understand the video gaming industry, it is vital to learn more about the people who are an integral part of it, the gamers. In 2011, 2012, and 2013, the Entertainment Software Association of Canada (ESAC) collected quantitative and qualitative data from computer and video game companies from across Canada. According to the ESAC (2011), 59% of Canadians are gamers, meaning they played computer or video games in the last four weeks. However,

most of these gamers play video games everyday (30%), a few days/week (45%), or once/week (15%) (ESAC, 2011). The majority of video gamers are male, at 62% (ESAC, 2011). According to ESAC (2013), the average age of the video gamer is 31, which is lower than the 2011 data at 33 years and the 2009 data at 35.8 years. Figure 1 provides a breakdown by age group of people who play video games.
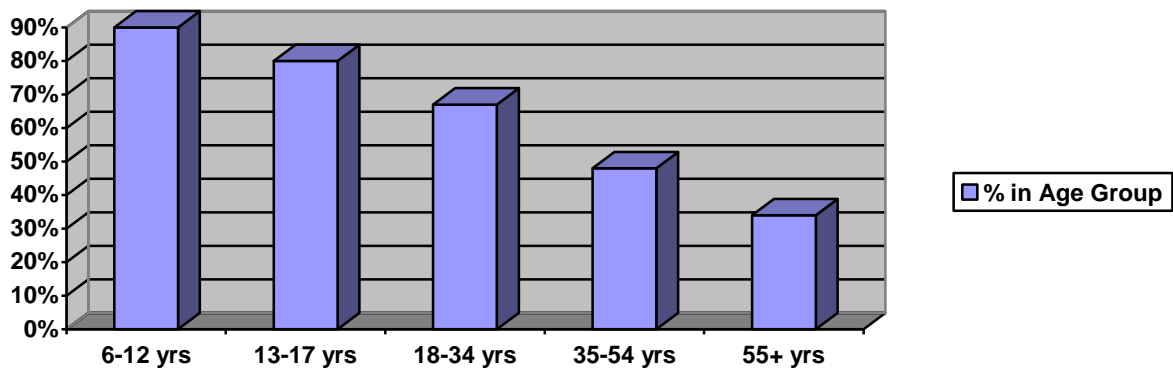
Source: NPD Group's 2010 Understanding the Canadian Gamer (as cited in ESAC, 2011)

Figure 1. Canadians, by age, who have played a video game in the past 4 weeks.

It is also important to understand what, in particular, people are doing when they play video games. ESAC found that in 2013, 47% of Canadian households have at least one videogame console, 96% own a computer (2011), and 61% have at least one video game console. ESAC (2010) found the computers (49%) and video game consoles (34%) were the most popular platforms to play video games. According to ESAC (2010), 76% of gamers play online, with 80% of these gamers playing at least once a week. The top three selling video games from July 2010 to June 2011 were *Call of Duty: Black Ops* for Xbox, *Call of Duty: Black Ops* for PlayStation 3, and

Halo: Reach for Xbox (ESAC, 2011). The top selling video game from July 2011 to August 2012 was *Call of Duty: MW3* (ESAC, 2012). These games are all first person shooter (FPS) games. A FPS game is "played from a first person perspective" (Klappenbach, 2012, What is a First Person Shooter section, para. 1). "The majority of game play in these games will require the use of rifle or pistol type weaponry" (Rybka, 2012, Definition section, para. 1).

This study focuses on young adult males from 18-30 years of age who play online FPS video games from their video game consoles. Since the majority of gamers are male, the interest here is in examining what motivates men to play online video games. It is important to focus on this age group because there has already been a lot of research about video games conducted on children, mainly concerned with the detrimental developmental effects of gaming; however, adults constitute a large proportion of the gaming population. Nearly 70% of Canadians ages 18 to 34 years play video games, which is a significant number of people.

In addition, it is important to learn more about the video gaming industry and the 'world' of these gamers in order to better understand why people play and learn about the new social worlds that are created with 'virtual' online gaming. Many gamers play online, with a large number of these gamers playing on a regular basis. The ESAC (2009) found that adults age 18-34 years do 46% of their gaming on a video game console, which is the major platform utilized by this group, increasing to 51% in 2012. The ESAC (2012) found that 40% of male gamers age 18-34 years plays shooter-type games, with 69% of those gamers playing shooter games

online. Given that the top three selling video games were all first person shooter games, their current popularity makes this particularly relevant for researchers to investigate. The rating for these games is Mature, which means they are intended for those 17 years and older. The study respected the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings and utilized these guidelines during participant selection.

Previous Studies – Motivations of Online Gamers

A study conducted by Yee (2006) examined the motivations of online gamers, specifically Massively-Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs), and how these motives related to age, gender, usage patterns, and in-game behaviours. MMORPGs are internet-based games that are played in a virtual world, played by many people at the same time, and are interactive ("Collins English", 2012). The "environment is perpetual. People log in, join the game, take on their role and leave whenever they wish, but the game continues" ("PC Mag", 2012, Definition section, para. 1). The results revealed three main categories of motives: the Achievement Component, the Social Component, and the Immersion Component. Within these three categories, there were 10 subgroups of motives present. The motivations within the Achievement Component were: Advancement – gain power, progress through game quickly, and gain wealth or status in the game; Mechanics – examining the underlying rules and system of the game; and Competition – challenge and compete with others.

The motivations within the Social Component were: Socializing – helping other players and chatting; Relationship – form long-term meaningful friendships; and Teamwork – working as a group and deriving satisfaction from this. The motivations within the Immersion Component were: Discovery – learning aspects about the game that most players don't know; Role playing – creating an online persona; Customization – customizing the appearance of their online character; and Escapism – avoiding real life problems.

The findings of this study indicated that more than one factor could motivate the gamers to play, which contrasted with Bartle's model (1996) that assumed one motivating factor stifled other types of play. The study also found that "different people choose to play games for very different reasons, and thus, the same video game may have very different meanings or consequences for different players" (Yee, 2006, p.774). MMORPGs are unique in the sense that the game exists within its own context and the "world" continues on even after one logs out, just as the real world continues to exist and change, even when you fall asleep. These gamers are able to create an Avatar to represent them and can present their character in the way they see fit – which may or may not reflect their own real life persona. The Immersion component of motivation lends itself well to this genre of video game, as the players spend their time immersed in the game creating and customizing their character; however, this is very different from other genres of games, such as first person shooters, sports games, music games, and etcetera. This genre of video game

is *very* different from the other types of video games; therefore, this data may not relate to other genres of video games so further research should be conducted.

A study conducted by Jansz and Tanis (2007), used an *exploratory* Internet survey to collect data about who the players of online first person shooter (FPS) games are, and why they play these particular games. The potential motives for gaming that were examined in this study were: competition, interest, enjoyment, fantasy, social interaction, excitement, and challenge. The respondents were divided into three groups: gamers who played online FPS games but were not in a "formalized" clan, belonged to a clan at an amateur level, or were part of a (semi)professional clan. A clan is "a group of gamers who form a team to compete against others over the Internet in multiplayer games. Clans chose their team name and will usually set up an initiation process" ("Webopedia", 2012, Term section, para. 1). The study showed that the motives were significantly affected by the type of clan membership. "The most committed gamers, that is, the ones who were members of a (semi)professional clan, scored highest on motives with respect to competition and challenge" (Jansz & Tanis, 2007, p. 135). However, social interaction was still a strong motivator, as more than 80% of the respondents belonged to a clan, and the "social interaction motive was the strongest predictor of the time actually spent on gaming" (Jansz & Tanis, 2007, p.135).

The Jansz and Tanis (2007) study used an exploratory Internet survey to collect data, which focused on seven distinct areas of motivation to play FPS games. This study could be viewed as a beginning avenue of research in this area, which

future research will need to expand upon. Even though this study focused on a different genre of video game, there is a link between these two studies - the social component of gaming was a strong motivating factor in this study by Jansz and Tanis (2007) and was one of the main categories of motives in a study by Yee (2006).

A study conducted by Hoffman and Nadelson (2010) examined the motivational factors associated with video gaming, specifically the factors considered when deciding to engage in video games, the aspects that lead to consistent reengagement, and the motivations of video game play. The three main factors considered when engaging in video games were: escapism and fun, social connectivity (66% of respondents played with others), and the achievement of task-related goals through control (achieving in-game goals and control over the characters, the game, and the level of challenge).

Consistent reengagement was fostered by social contexts (socialization with others was a prevailing reason), challenge (an appropriate amount of difficulty, not too easy or complicated), and positive affect (feeling satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment with achievements). According to Hoffman and Nadelson (2010), "players participate in video gaming to fulfill recreational, social, and esteem needs" (p. 265). Motivational factors were socialization, physiological satisfaction (fun, relaxation, stress reduction, or escape), achievement motivation (attaining success in the game), and an appealing game environment (game design or graphics, predictability, or genre of game). Socialization aspects and positive feelings, such as fun and satisfaction were a common link between deciding to game, consistent re-

engagement, and motivating factors to game. This study shows there is academic interest in learning about gaming and motivations, while future research can help expand upon this knowledge.

A study conducted by Westwood and Griffiths (2010) examined the structural elements of games and how they motivate individuals to play. The five main types of structural elements were social (communication, relationships), manipulation/control (personalize the game settings, game save options), narrative/identity (avatar creation, progression of a story line), reward and punishment (levelling up, character progression, death), and presentation (audio-visual features). The study found that there were six different types of gamers, with differing play motivations. The different motivating factors were personal enjoyment, social reasons, high quality game graphics, external rewards (e.g.. Xbox LIVE achievement boards), personal accomplishment and achievement, creating an Avatar, strong storyline, good game play, and leisure. This study reveals that socialization is a motivating factor for gamers. This study focused on only five main elements; however, future research could expand on these elements and explore other concepts of motivation through the open dialogue of a qualitative study design.

A study conducted by Demetrovics and colleagues (2011) investigated the motivations that drive people to play online games. The study was carried out in two phases. In phase one, a compilation of motives for online gaming was collected through a review of the current research and from a sample of people who were

regular online gamers. With the help of three independent raters, these motives were categorized into seven areas: coping-escape, fantasy, skill development, omnipotence (power), recreation, competition, and social motives. These categories were used to develop the Motives for Online Gaming Questionnaire (MOGQ), which was used in phase two.

Phase two involved using an online questionnaire to sample 3,818 online gamers, who were recruited using online gaming websites. The new MOGQ was tested in this sample population, and analyzed using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The study found that "although negative outcomes of online gaming are frequently mentioned, gaming has a diverse motivational background and satisfies various real needs" (Demetrovics et al., 2011, p. 823). The authors found that the MOGQ was an adequate measurement tool that can be used in future research to further explore online gaming motivations. This study sought to develop a quantitative measurement tool to collect data about online gaming motivations and the researchers were able to test the questionnaire on a sample group and validate the tool. However, a gap still remains in the literature, as the quantitative studies do not allow for as much diversity and depth in response to these important questions about online video gaming.

Motivation and Children

A study conducted by Ferguson and Olson (2013) examined children's motivations for video game play. This study identified a four-factor model for motivating factors: fun/challenge factor; catharsis/autonomy factor (releasing anger,

frustration or escaping the real world); social relatedness factor; and bored factor

(nothing else to do). "With the exception of the bored motivation, males

demonstrated higher levels of endorsement of the other three motivations:

fun/challenge, catharsis, and social. In this sense, males appear to generally be

more 'motivated' to play video games than females" (Ferguson & Olson, 2013, p.

162). This study reveals important findings about children's motivating factors to

game and shows connections to the other studies examined, as social factors and fun

are common motivators in these studies. There still remains a gap in the literature,

as this study only focused on children and didn't explore other age cohorts.

A paper written by Olthouse (2009) examined why children play video games

by reviewing previous research and literature. There are several motivating factors

discussed, including: fun (an enjoyable leisure activity); gaming as a form of play

(participation is voluntary and the process of gaming is enjoyable); reinforcement

(to gain rewards while avoiding punishment within the game); social interaction

(connecting with other players, collaborating together, and competing); fantasy

(players are removed from reality, while realistic audio and visual effects enhance

the experience); and cognitive exercise (solving puzzles or achieving a new skill can

be an integral part of certain games). This paper provided an important review of

the existing literature on motivating factors for children and discussed several

motivating factors. The data provide some clear links with other literature

concerning adult age cohorts, examining motivating factors to game, such as

socialization factors and fun. However, it also provides some distinct differences

between the findings in the child studies versus the adult studies, such as gaming as a form of play, which is why it is important to conduct more studies on adults' gaming behaviours.

Common Themes in the Online Gaming Motivation Research

Some common themes have emerged in the literature concerning gamers' motivations to play video games. Motivators for playing include: *entertainment and leisure* (Wan & Chiou, 2006), *emotional coping* (Wan & Chiou, 2006), *escapism* (Barnett et al., 1997; King, Delfabbro, & Griffiths, 2009; Olson, 2010; Ryan, Rugby, & Przybylski, 2006; Wan & Chiou, 2006), *satisfying social needs* (Barnett et al., 1997; Olson, 2010; Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006; Wan & Chiou, 2006), *competition* (Olson, 2010; Ryan, Rigby, Przybylski, 2006; Vorderer, Hartmann, & Klimmt, 2003), *achievement* (Barnett et al., 1997; Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006; Wan & Chiou, 2006), *excitement* (Wan & Chiou, 2006), *challenge* (Olson, 2010; Wan & Chiou, 2006), *power* (Barnett et al., 1997; Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006; Wan & Chiou, 2006), and *game customization* (Olson, 2010).

One common motivating factor revealed through all of these studies is the socialization factor. These studies may have focused on different aspects of gaming, such as a particular age group, genre of game, or comparing results based on clan membership; however, one very common factor emerged and needs to be examined further. The social element of gaming appears to be important to all types of gamers, and it is necessary to examine this relationship further. The best way to examine the social aspects of gaming is to be immersed in the environment in order

to observe this social environment first hand. Socialization is directly linked to the social conventions and norms in their environment, as people learn how to interact with people in ways that are appropriate to the specific environment they are immersed in with others.

The literature indicates that there has been some interest in exploring the motivations of gamers; however, the research has not fully explored the different genres of video games and what influences gamers to choose specific types of games. Motivations to play MMORPGs were explored in one study and indicated that there could be more than one motivating factor to play these types of games. An exploration of the different genres of video games would provide valuable insight into gamers' choices and motivations to keep playing. The literature suggests that there is a strong need for more research to be conducted concerning current video game trends. This includes the online gaming community, the various genres of video games, the different types of gamers, and the various gaming platforms available. The literature also revealed that a lot of the studies conducted have been quantitative in nature, where a qualitative study would provide the opportunity to explore and understand the phenomenon from a different perspective.

A New Social World

Online gaming creates a new social world where people interact and engage with one another while playing video games together. According to Saunders, Rutkowski, van Genuchten, Vogel, and Orrego (2011):

Virtual worlds (VWs) are digital environments in which individuals, groups, and even organizations interact in virtual, nonphysical spaces . . . that only become inviting when users can expect certain activities to be performed there consistently. That is, users like to go to familiar places where they interact either with other users or with virtual objects. (p.1079)

The online video gaming community fits this description well, as people interact with other people and objects within the game, while in cyberspace, with the expectation to engage in video gaming activities and engage in social interactions with others. There are different acceptable definitions of the term 'virtual world'. According to PC Magazine Digital Group (2014), a virtual world can be "a generic term for the online world of the Internet" (Definition section, para. 2). For the purposes of this study, the online virtual world of gaming will be discussed in the context of the above definitions.

These online social activities have real value. As Odom, Zimmerman, and Forlizzi found in their study, "there is a growing belief that digital possessions are more valuable than physical possessions – and that the social interaction surrounding online objects can dramatically increase their worth" (as cited in Greengard, 2012, p. 14). People are investing their own money and time in various online activities, so there is a real value to these digital possessions. Digital, "virtual worlds" are increasingly becoming entrenched in people's "real worlds" with the regular use of social networking sites, downloadable music and movies, online gaming, and blog communities. For example, people will take pictures on their

phones and instantly post them on Facebook or Instagram to share with friends and family. People are connected to others in their social circle at the click of a button, can share information and photos with the important people in their lives, and stay connected with friends and family. The social element of these communities appears to play a vital role not only to their success, but also to the positive affect people enjoy while using them. According to Greengard (2012), "virtual possessions play an increasingly important role in our daily lives. How we think about them and deal with them is changing the way we think and interact with others" (p. 14). If the way we think and interact with others is changing, it is important to learn more about both the short- and long-term impact this will have on our social interactions, including the social conventions that govern these behaviours. It is important to consider the relationship and impact of the online gaming community with the broader social world.

These "virtual worlds" not only influence how people think and act in their daily lives, but also how people interact with others while immersed in these "virtual worlds". As King, Delfabbro and Griffith (2009) state, "video game culture, like all cultures, has its own unique conventions, attitudes, and idiolects" (p. 558). This would mean that the online gaming community then has its own distinct culture, with unique norms and behaviours. Culture refers to the "attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group" (Culture, 2015, Definition section, para. 2). Merriam-Webster (2015) defines culture as "the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a

place or time" (Full Definition of Culture section, para. 5). The culture of the online gaming community is created by the people who share this online environment and the interactions they have with one another. Although the culture of the online gaming community encompasses many aspects, this study will focus on one aspect - the social conventions, commonly referred to as the cultural norms and behaviours.

Researchers, the general population, and the gaming industry need to gain more knowledge about this new social world in order to have a better understanding of the gamers and their needs. Researchers need to "build effective relationships between the research discipline and the gaming industry and community" (King, et al., 2009, p. 555), as this will help alleviate the negative stereotypes surrounding gamers and help others gain a more holistic view of the whole gaming industry. The general population needs to learn more about this popular social activity consuming the leisure time of the important people in their lives. As well, they need to better understand how the society they function in and the people they interact with on a daily basis are or could be impacted by the social interactions and conventions occurring in this environment. The culture of the online gaming community does not operate in isolation, but can be impacted by and can impact the culture of the real world. The gaming industry can gain valuable insight into the gaming environment created through this online forum and use this information as a catalyst for growth and change in the development of future games, changes in online gaming policies, and possibly connecting to other social communities.

There have been various studies on related topics, such as the impacts of social media on different groups of people (O'Keefe, Clarke-Pearson, & Council on Communications and Media, 2011), examining the in-game behaviour and talk among players in an online FPS game in order to understand their social characters (Wright, Boria, & Breidenbach, 2002), exploring the social conventions and norms in collaborative virtual environments (Becker & Mark, 1998; Book, 2004; Carey, 2007; Martey & Stromer-Galley, 2007), investigating how players engage in expansive game play with new negotiated imposed rules in online games (Parker, 2008), and examining the groups formed through social networking processes in massively multiplayer online role-playing games and their socializations (Sherlock, 2007). However, it appears that there is a lack of studies in the literature in regards to the social conventions of the online gaming environment.

Carey (2007) indicates that:

Social conventions are very much at work in our interactions with other people through media. They are the explicit and unwritten rules of behaviour in social contexts . . . Social conventions are linked to situations and may vary by culture, ethnic group, region, age, and other factors." (p. 83)

People playing video games online are socially exposed to other people; therefore, social conventions have emerged and will evolve over time with societal and technological changes. People interacting in online social worlds come into contact with people from various parts of the world with different social conventions in their own "real" worlds. People can portray themselves in any fashion, without having

the same degree of accountability as in face-to-face interactions. Duetch and Gerard found that social norms within social environments are paramount to successful interactions (as cited in Martey & Stromer-Galley, 2007, p. 316). If the social interactions in online gaming are to be considered successful, in the sense that the environment is both social and functional, then social conventions must exist within this environment too. Since the research conducted on the social conventions in online gaming is meagre and just beginning to emerge, it is important to conduct further research to understand these conventions, what they are, how people learn them, and the consequences of non-compliance.

The Xbox Live online gaming network began in 2002, the Play Station Network launched in 2006, and the Nintendo Network has launched on their various gaming platforms starting in 2012. Online gaming has grown in popularity over these last ten years, as about 75% of gamers play online (ESAC, 2010). With so many people playing together online, some behaviour regulations, in the form of social conventions, are needed in order to avoid problems. As Carey (2007) states "people using new media often borrow conventions from a previous or related medium" (p. 84). These "borrowed" conventions can then be modified to better suit the needs of individuals over time.

Motivations and Social Conventions

Motivations to play online video games and the social conventions of the online gaming community are operating within the same environment, and it is possible that one or both may have an impact on the other. Since socialization

appears to be a vital link in the existing research on motivations to play online games, then it is possible that social conventions are influenced by gamers' motivations in these interactions and vice versa.

Theoretical Framework

Human Ecology Theory is conducive to the ethnographic nature and purpose of this study. This theory looks at the interactions of people with their environments and considers these relationships as a system (Bubolz & Sontag, 2008). Throughout a process of mutual influence and change, both the people and the environment are closely interconnected. Any change in one part of the system affects the other parts of the system, as well as the whole system.

Encyclopedia (2003) describes the Human Ecology Theory:

In this theoretical framework, biological, social, and physical aspects of the organism are considered within the context of their environments. These environments may be the natural world, reality as constructed by humans, and/or the social and cultural milieu in which the organism exists (Human Ecology Theory section, para. 1).

This description of environment fits well with the concepts of the virtual world, as described in the previous chapter. The virtual world is a unique environment created by humans, which encompasses the social and cultural elements surrounding people and is a product of the reality created through online interactions and presentation of self. This study will examine how two or more people interact when playing online video games within the public, social and

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cultural environment of the online gaming community. Technology, in the form of video game equipment and internet access are both required aspects to creating this environment.

As Bubolz and Sontag (2008) discuss, the socio-cultural environment exists within the natural and human-built environments, including other people, cultural constructs such as values, and socio-economic factors such as regulatory systems (as cited in Human Ecology Theory, 2003). These concepts relate well to this study, as a unique socio-cultural environment exists within the online gaming environment. There are human relationships that exist exclusively within this environment and some relationships that carry over into the real physical world. Factors such as societal attitudes and cultural values can play a role in and impact the people, environment, and the interactions among them. This study examined the system of the online gaming environment, the people interacting in this environment, social norms, and the regulatory systems in effect within this environment.

Each major component in this system is continuously changing. Video game technology is continually evolving and offering people new gaming components. People change over time as they pass through various developmental stages and have different life experiences. Any public domains, including online environments, are continuously influenced by any shifts in societal attitudes. Not only do the changes influence each part of the system separately, but they also impact each other. For example, when online gaming became possible, this changed the way people could game with others using their video game consoles. Online game play

can include both verbal and written forms of communication – through conversation generated over microphone and headset/speakers and/or typed text messages sent to others gamers' message boxes, which will modify and impact game play. As Srivastava (2005) suggests, technological advances have an effect on society. Since technology is an integral part of our environment, any changes or advances in technology will continually impact the people in that environment, which impacts the system. For example, texting on cell phones has grown in popularity and has made it possible to communicate with other people in situations where it would not have been possible before, like work, school, or even church. "Change in any part of the system affects the system as a whole and its other subparts, creating the need for adaptation of the entire system, rather than minor attention to only one aspect of it" (Encyclopedia, 2003, The Family as a System section, para. 2).

Advancing Social Science, Human Ecology, and Cultural Ecology

The inquiries of this study will help to advance both the Social Sciences and the study of Human Ecology. Social Science is the study of human society and social interactions and relationships, and how people behave and impact the world (Economic and Social Research Council, 2015; Social Science, 2015). This study looks at a group of people within society, the gamers, and examines their relationships with other online gamers. Since social conventions govern people's behaviour in social settings, it is important to investigate the social conventions in the online gaming community, the impact people's own behaviours and motives have on these social interactions and conventions, and how these impact one

another and the world. As technology advances and society adapts to these changes, it becomes increasingly important to understand the impact these advances are having on society. Online gaming is becoming increasingly popular with people of all ages and it is important for the Social Sciences to keep up with all of the new avenues of socialization by examining current trends.

Human Ecology is "the branch of sociology that is concerned with studying the relationships between human groups and their physical and social environments" (Farlex, 2003-2015, Human Ecology section, para. 1). In other words, it has been described as the study of "the relationship between humans and their natural, social, and built environments" (Human Ecology, 2015, Human Ecology section, para. 1). Both of these definitions converge that human ecology focuses on people and their relationships with their environments. The online gaming community can be viewed as both a social and built environment, as socialization is a natural bi-product of a social gaming network and it was built by the video gaming industry as a form of entertainment and leisure. It is important for more research to be conducted in order to explore and understand gamers' connections to this online gaming community.

"Cultural ecology and human ecology are closely related and represent a continuum of approaches and themes" (Zimmerer, n.d., Introduction section, para. 1). It is important to discuss cultural ecology, as this study, the participants, and the online gaming community all co-exist in a cultural context. Cultural ecology "denotes the habitually embedded adaptive practices and behaviors that have

coevolved in the relations between humans and their nonhuman worlds" (Zimmerer, n.d., Introduction section, para. 1). This description accurately describes the social norms and conventions that have become deeply entrenched in people's behaviors and that help people function in their relationships with others, in different settings like the online gaming community. These behaviors can vary, depending on the situation, the setting, and the backgrounds of the people involved. As with other social conventions and norms, these practices and behaviors are adaptable and have modified over time as society changes. To study the social norms and conventions in the online gaming community is important to advance the study of cultural ecology. As well, this will advance the knowledge of the current practices and behaviors as they change over time.

Chapter Three - Methodology

Ethnographic Research Approach

Ethnographic research using qualitative data allow theory to be inductively generated from the research study in the real world (Patton, 2002). This approach was ideal for this study because video gamers needed to be studied in their natural environment and not in a laboratory. As Schutt (2011) states, "Ethnographic research can also be called naturalistic, because it seeks to describe and understand the natural social world as it really is, in all its richness and detail" (p. 334). A naturalistic environment allowed the researcher to collect more realistic data and to draw conclusions from the data collected. Also, very little research has been conducted concerning online video game play, so this study explored this topic and generated new knowledge. The open-ended nature of qualitative data allowed the researcher the opportunity to understand the world from the participants' perspectives (Patton, 2002).

As King and colleagues (2009) indicate, "participants are much more likely to place confidence in and disclose information to a researcher whom they feel understands their activity" (p. 558). In order to gain a better understanding about video games, online gaming, and FPS games, the researcher had already been playing these types of games and had been engaging first hand with friends and family members during their game play prior to the research study. According to Patton (2002), it is essential to understand the background context of the research site. In order to "truly understand a society one had to spend enough time there to

learn the language and acclimate to the situation" (Hopper, 2011, Why do Qualitative Research section, para. 3). The researcher has spent a lot of time immersed in this environment in order to gain a deeper understanding of gamers and the gaming community.

Methodological Framework

This ethnographic research study was conducted in three parts, utilizing participant observation, individual interviews, and a focus group. In the first part, participant observation was used as a method of data collection to allow the researcher to immerse herself in the setting being studied and gain an insider's point of view. Ethnography allowed the researcher to approach the study in a holistic way, so it could be a process of discovery, making inferences, and analyzing the data from an emic perspective – from the participants' viewpoint (Patton, 2002; Sanday, 1979; Whitehead, 2005).

In the second part, individual interviews took place, immediately after the participant observation sessions. In ethnography, "interviews provide for what might be called 'targeted' data collection by asking specific but open-ended questions" (Hoey, 2011, What is Ethnography section, para. 6). The purpose of the interviews was to follow up on prior observations, enabling the researcher to clarify any questions that arose from the observations, and to ask any unanswered questions. According to Patton (2002) "we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions . . . the purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 341). The researcher's aim was to encourage a

natural and active conversation, in order to gather vital data about the concepts, while expressing genuine interest in the participants' stories and views. "The perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

The third part of the study involved all of the participants in a focus group. The focus group took place after all of the individual interviews had been conducted. This gave the researcher the opportunity to confirm her interpretations from the previous observations with the participants. Focus groups can "take the researcher inside the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 112). It allowed the participants the opportunity to hear the perspectives of fellow gamers in a friendly environment. As Patton (2002) suggests, "the object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of others" (p. 386).

According to Hine (2000) "Ethnography can therefore be used to develop an enriched sense of the meanings of the technology and the cultures which enable it and are enabled by it" (p. 8). An ethnographic approach was chosen for this study because the researcher was interested in examining the culture of online video game playing and the gamers who play. Patton (2002) defines culture as a "collection of behaviour patterns and beliefs that constitutes standards for deciding what is, . . . what can be, . . . how one feels about it, . . . what to do about it, and . . . how to go about doing it" (p. 81). As an individual already immersed in the technological culture of our society, the researcher was able to account for and

acknowledge what is already known and focus on what she was trying to gain a further understanding of. The researcher's strong educational background allowed her to use her previous knowledge to examine what happens throughout the data collection process and derive logical conclusions based on what was actually observed.

Research Tools

The research tools used in this study were developed and modified by the researcher, in collaboration with the advisory committee.

Consent Form

The consent form (Appendix C) was written to meet the ethical standards of the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. The participants were sent copies of the consent form to read, review, and obtain any clarification, prior to their participation in the study. Before beginning Phase One of the project, the participants were debriefed about the requirements of the study, reminded that participation was completely voluntary, and provided with a paper copy of the consent form to review and sign. All participants were provided with a copy of the signed consent form for their records.

Individual Interview Questions

The individual interview focused on the purpose of the research and research questions proposed by the researcher. The interview questions (Appendix D) were meant to serve as a basic framework to follow; however,

other related topics and questions that arose were discussed. Before the interviews began, the researcher informed the participant that he did not need to answer any question(s) he did not feel comfortable answering.

Focus Group Questions

A framework of potential focus group questions was outlined before Phase One of the study began. Following Phase One and Two of the study, the researcher modified and detailed the questions to better reflect on the information gathered in the first parts of the study and to gain more detailed information, in regards to the research questions proposed (Appendix E).

Equipment Setup & Testing

All of the equipment needed to complete the study and gather data needed to be setup and tested before the study commenced, in order to select the optimal settings for data collection and to identify and/ or resolve any potential issues in advance. Over a six week period, each of the gaming systems was setup with several trial gaming sessions. As well, the video and audio recording equipment were tested.

The PS3 and Xbox allow for different setting options, so the researcher had to experiment with the equipment and complete several gaming test sessions with friends. The researcher tested audio outputs and inputs, in order to achieve the best sound. The researcher collected feedback from her friends on sound quality, background noise, game noise, and interference.

The Xbox settings were adjusted so the audio output played through the speakers and the headset, and audio input was through the headset. The volume game settings were consistently set for all gaming sessions: the chat volume was at level 10, the game volume was at level 1, and the speaker volume was at 28.

During the Play Station test runs, the researcher encountered a few problems. As for the audio output, there was a strong echo during online chat and it was difficult to audibly hear the other online gamers' voices. Several test runs needed to be completed in order to successfully adjust the audio settings and resolve the issues. Once the issues were resolved, the game settings were set for all gaming sessions. The audio output played through the speakers, while the audio input was through the Bluetooth headset. The game volume was set to 1/2, the voice volume was set to 3/4, and the speaker volume was at 30.

The test sessions were recorded with a video camera, in order to test the recording equipment and to determine the audio settings for the gaming systems and the lighting for optimal recordings. The available basement lighting is on three switches, two of which are dimmer switches. The stairwell light was turned on and the two dimmer switches were on halfway. This allowed for optimal gaming and recording of the gaming sessions.

The individual interviews and the focus group were audio recorded using a voice recorder. A few test runs were completed in order to determine

audio recording level, recorder placement, and file size and space. The audio

recording level was set at 15 for all study recordings, with the recorder placed

between the researcher and the participant(s), no more than 5 feet away.

After each recording session, the file was transferred to the researcher's

computer and erased from the voice recorder to ensure enough file space.

Sampling Strategy

Participants

The participants in this exploratory study were selected using homogeneous

sampling – in order to maximize the in-depth information gathered about this

subgroup of gamers. A group of six males between the ages of 18 and 30 years were

selected. The participants needed to meet certain criteria to be selected: male; 18-35

years; current gamers; familiar with at least one of the video games used in the

study; could choose to play individually or with a friend; and comfortable and

willing to chat during game play. There are many different types of gamers;

however, this study focused on the experiences of online gamers who play FPS

games because these games are very popular, especially among this gender and age

group. The participants had prior experience playing the FPS games Halo: Reach

and/or Modern Warfare 3 on the Xbox system and/or the PlayStation 3.

The participants were all Canadian males, with two between 18-24 years of

age, and four between 25-30 years of age. The ethnicity of the participants was:

Caucasian (3), East Indian (2), and Francophone-Canadian (1). The employment/

student status was: three participants were full time students, with two of those

employed part time as well, and the three other participants were employed full time. One participant was enrolled in high school at the time, three participants had completed their high school education, and two participants had completed post-secondary education. See Table 2 below for a summary of the demographic information of the participants.

The participants all had experience playing video games and discussed how they began playing video games as young children. All of the participants talked about playing video games online, and five participants spent at least some of their time gaming offline. On average, the participants spend about three hours/day gaming online, while spending less than an hour/day gaming offline.

Both gaming systems were utilized in the study, with two people playing the Play Station 3 and four people playing the Xbox 360. All the participants chose to play Modern Warfare 3 (MW3), and no one played Halo: Reach. Of the six participants, four engaged in solo play, while two played in a dyad. Since the researcher wanted to emulate a natural environment, the participants were allowed to choose if they wanted to play solo or with a friend. Another dyad had been recruited to participate but opted out once they were provided with the commitment details of the study.

Table 2

Demographics of the Participants

CATEGORY	OPTIONS	# OF PARTICIPANTS
Gender		
	Male	6
Age		
	18-24 years	2
	25-30 years	4
Ethnic Background		
	Caucasian	3
	East Indian	2
	French-Canadian	1
Employment/ Student Status		
	Student - Full Time	3
	Employed – Full Time	3
	Employed – Part Time	2
Education		
	Enrolled in High School	1
	Completed High School	3
	Post Secondary Education	2
Gaming System Used		
	Play Station 3	2
	Xbox 360	4
Game Played		
	Modern Warfare 3	6
Type of Play		
	Solo	4
	Dyad	2

Recruitment

The sample was selected using purposive sampling, focusing on particular characteristics of participants to achieve a homogeneous sample. The participants were recruited by word of mouth by the researcher. The researcher had been networking through her husband's work connections with some acquaintances who knew males that met the above criteria, who then discussed the study with their own friends. Several individuals had expressed a preliminary interest in the study.

The participants were selected from this group of people to participate and were provided with specific information about the details and requirements of the study. A few participants at a time were selected to take part in the study, and recruitment ceased after six participants completed Phase One and Phase Two, due to a combination of factors. There were some practical aspects, such as the challenge of recruiting more people interested in participating as a dyad and the time constraints associated with completing a research thesis. As well, data saturation was occurring within the participant data. In addition, each participant participated in a three part study, which was time and labour intensive and actually provided three data sources for each participant. The participants were provided with a small token of appreciation for their time and participation in the study, remuneration in the form of a $50 cash honorarium, distributed after all three phases of the study were complete. As well, there were three random draws for one $10 gift certificate to EB Games, and two $20 gift certificates to EB Games.

Site

All three parts of the study took place in the researcher's home. During the first part of the study, the setting provided was a natural gaming environment for the participants. Four of the males participated in the gaming part of the study alone and two males participated in a dyad, as it is common for gamers to play in this manner. The participants signed the consent forms and the author debriefed the participants about the particulars of the study. The second part of the study was conducted with the same participants in separate interviews, immediately following

the gaming sessions. The third part of the study involved all the participants

participating together in a focus group discussion, at a separate time.

Data Gathering

The data were collected over a time period, from October 2012 to June 2013.

In Phase One, the site was set up prior to the participants' arrival. There was one

TV projector set up, an Xbox or Play Station 3, headset or Kinect sensor, and two

controllers available for game play. The observations took place for approximately

three hours per gaming session. The participants played Modern Warfare 3 online.

The researcher was interested in capturing the social interactions between

the participants in the study and the online gamers in the virtual world. A video

camera was set up to capture the audio and visual responses of the study

participants to the other online gamers during game play. The researcher took

written notes on the audio responses of these other online gamers. The data

collected from the online gamers will remain anonymous because no personal or

identifying information was collected or recorded. According to the Tri-Council

Policy Statement-2 (TCPS-2), since no personal information was being collected, no

consent was required. As well, the observation was non-intrusive, took place in a

public setting where there was no expectation of privacy, and the individuals will

not be identified in any form upon dissemination of the results (TCPS-2, 2010). The

individuals' privacy was and will be protected at all times, as no gamer tags were

recorded with data collection. The researcher recorded the data with different coded

tags, such as G1 for gamer 1, G2 for gamer 2, and so on.

This study sought to explore the online gaming community in as natural a setting as possible. Gamers were aware that other people could hear what they are saying if they choose to converse with others while online, whether they were fellow gamers, people in his or her own home, family or friends of gamers, researchers, the police, or politicians. So any information or data collected in this setting has already been available at a public level.

The online gaming community provides a unique observational environment, where acquiring consent in these circumstances would be neither possible nor practical. There are many gamers involved in each round of gaming, with gamers changing continuously. Verbal interjectory would interrupt the naturally occurring conversation and the flow of game play, if an attempt to gain consent from each player were made.

As the participants played, the researcher acted as a quiet observer in order to promote a relaxed atmosphere, to help participants feel comfortable and become engrossed in the game play, and act naturally. These strategies were being employed to show respect for the gamers and the gaming community, as the goal of the research study was to understand the gamers' perspectives.

The second part of the study involved the six males participating in individual interviews about online FPS game play. The author had a list of questions and started the discussion with an introductory question. The interview discussions were audio recorded using a recording device. The author used the list of questions to keep the discussion on topic and to keep conversation flowing. The

individual interviews concluded when the key questions had been answered, approximately over a one-hour block of time. The researcher debriefed each participant after this portion of the study.

The third part of the study involved all of the males participating in a focus group about online FPS game play. The author reviewed this portion of the study with the participants. The researcher had the participants briefly introduce themselves to one another and began the discussion with an introductory question. The focus group discussion was audio recorded using a recording device. The author facilitated further discussion by posing questions to the participants throughout the focus group session. The focus group discussion concluded when the key questions had been answered, approximately over a one and a half hour block of time.

Data Storage

The video data, audio recordings, and the written transcripts have only been viewed by the researcher and her supervisor, in order to protect the identity of the study participants and to maintain confidentiality. The video and audio recordings are stored on the researcher's personal laptop and password protected. As well, no identifying information is stored within any of the transcripts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred through the entire data collection process and afterward. Schutt (2011) states "there are no particular methodological techniques associated with ethnography, other than just 'being there.' The analytic process relies on the thoroughness and insight of the researcher to 'tell it like it is' in the

setting, as he or she experienced it" (p. 334). Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the author kept a log of her thoughts, interpretations, and questions that have arisen, and she was mindful of the setting in which the data were collected. The data needed to be assessed in the context of the online gaming community, which netnography allows. "Netnography is "the use of ethnographic methods to study online communities. Also termed cyberethnography and virtual ethnography" (Schutt, 2011, p.335).

Following the first part of the study, the researcher watched the video recordings of each participant to become familiar with the data and what the data encompassed. Then, the researcher transcribed the verbal dialogue for each participant and printed the transcriptions. The transcripts were then analyzed, and the data were marked where there were any patterns, similarities, or differences within the data. While reading the transcripts, the researcher focused on one research question or section of a research question at a time and coded the data with coloured markers that represented that research question. For example, after color coding the data pink for motivations, the researcher made a list of all motivations for each participant.

Following the second part of the study, the researcher listened to the audio tapes in order to become familiar with the data. The tapes were transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were reviewed for any patterns, similarities, and differences within the data. Again, the researcher coded the data with coloured markers to match the research questions and data from the video recordings. So the

researcher looked through the pink coded data and added these motivations to each participant list. The researcher reviewed the highlighted data and began to notice some common terminology and recorded these common terms. From these codes, categories were formulated and the data were placed into appropriate categories. The coded data were reviewed together, and common themes across all data were identified to create and modify the coding groups. The data and coding categories were re-read and reviewed continuously throughout this process to ensure that the categories best represented the information.

The researcher recognized that she had to be thorough when analyzing the data and to let the data guide the process, so that the findings accurately represented the views of the participants and the online gaming community as it exists. For example, the researcher began examining the transcripts for motivations to play online games, so each transcript was read thoroughly and then highlighted in pink anytime a word or sentence described the participant's motivations. Then, the researcher wrote down these motivations on a piece of paper, keeping each participant's answers segregated from the others. The researcher looked through the lists to find motivating factors that were the same or similar among the participants, such as "fun", "competition", "socialize with friends", etc. Some terms that were similar were grouped together, like "boredom" and "nothing to do." The researcher had to determine and define each category, in order to effectively place the data into appropriate categories. In total 16 different coding categories were formulated for motivations to play online games.

Here is an example of how one category was formulated:

Ease of Play:

>   -One participant stated "Call of Duty, I can jump in and play for half
>   an hour and quit";
>
>   -Another participant said "There's no real waiting. You just kinda sign
>   on and go";
>
>   -Another participant shared "You can just play and go. Drop it, you
>   know if something comes up halfway through Saturday";
>
>   -One participant said when comparing MMORPGs to FPS games
>   "Gotta work towards a lot more things in those types of games
>   compared to this, where you can just play it"; and
>
>   -One participant said "For me at least, it's drop and go."

These participants were explaining that for them, FPS games allowed them to log on quickly and begin playing right away, without a long-term time commitment that some other genres of video games require. The term ease of play best described this category, as it means these participants are able to play FPS games without a sense of burden or pressure.

This analysis process was effective because it allowed for a process of discovery, making inferences, and continuous inquiry, which are all essential to an ethnographic study (Whitehead, 2005). Since the research about the online gaming community is still emerging, the exploratory nature of this study allowed the researcher to gain and share new knowledge about this community. For example,

some new motivating factors to play online FPS games were discovered that were not mentioned in the existing literature on online gaming, such as strategy/tactics and fitting in. As well, this study explored the relationships between the virtual world of the online gaming community and the real physical world. The participants were able to share many personal stories that provided evidence that the two worlds are very connected and that the connections carry over into the real world. For example, one participant shared stories of online theft and the impact it can have in real life, such as law-suits, personal vendettas, and relationship breakdowns. The data analysis was an ongoing process of sifting through vast amounts of information to uncover the knowledge and reach conclusions from the evidence. The coding themes and categorization system were not determined prior to data collection, to avoid leading the analysis. Instead, the findings were allowed to emerge out of the data (Patton, 2002).

Ethics Board Approval

All research projects involving humans conducted at, or under the auspices of the University of Manitoba, require prior ethics review and approval by a Research Ethics Board (REB) (University of Manitoba, 2012). This study involved the participation of human subjects; therefore, the researcher obtained approval for the study. The author submitted the protocols for approval to the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board, following the approval of the thesis proposal. The proposed study was approved by the JFREB. A copy of the Ethics Approval Certificate is provided in Appendix F.

Chapter Four – Findings

The participants in this study are not identified in any manner that will compromise the protection of their anonymity, in sharing the findings or in the discussion of the data. There was a small sample size of only six participants and it is important not to breach their confidentiality. The participants in the study are identified with the word *participant* or the label *P1*, *P2*, etcetera. Other online gamers are identified as *an online gamer, gamer,* or *G1, G2,* etcetera.

Motivations to Play Online FPS Games

Several motivations to play online First Person Shooter (FPS) games were discovered during the individual interviews and at the focus group discussion. The motivations were categorized into sixteen themes and were defined by the researcher as follows in Table 3.

Table 3

Motivations to Play Online FPS Games and Definitions

Motivation	Definition
Fun	An activity that is enjoyable to participate in
Competition	The act of trying to succeed in a game against others
Escapism	An activity that helps one avoid the real world temporarily
Socialization	Engaging with other people in a social environment
Achievements	To gain some sort of accomplishment during game play, e.g. unlock a new gun
Boredom	Lack of involvement or interest in an activity
Entertainment	Participation in a leisure activity

Challenge	To test one's abilities against himself or others to improve one's own skills
Routine	Doing an activity in the regular course of the day, often at the same time
Instant Gratification/ Satisfaction	A pleasurable feeling, resulting from something one did
Engaging	The immersive environment captivates the gamers, includes the graphics, sounds, & game play; enthusiasm
Winning	A victory
Ease of Play	Able to play FPS games without a sense of burden
Fitting In	A sense of belonging to a social circle by sharing common interests
Camaraderie	A sense of friendship and trust
Strategy/ Tactics	Making a plan and working together with team mates to achieve a goal

[4]

(Cambridge Dictionaries, 2015; Dictionary.com; 2015; Merriam-Webster, 2015; Oxford Dictionaries, 2015; The Free Dictionary, 2003 – 2015)

The data lead to the discovery of these themes and the researcher resolved that these codes best represented what the participants shared in describing their motivations to play FPS games. As well, the researcher felt that these codes were supported through her direct observations in the gaming sessions.

Fun: "I feel great! It's like fun, man. Like…it's amazing, I can't even explain. It's like so much fun. I love…I'm a gamer, you know."; "If I'm gonna play it, I'm gonna play to enjoy it."; "Playing online for your own enjoyment."; "its fun, you know."; "Yeah cuz we were having a whole lot of fun."

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[4] The researcher consulted multiple sources to compare definitions of terms and defined them to fit with the interpretation of data.

The words fun, enjoyable, and amazing were all mentioned throughout the discussions as motivators to start and continue playing the games. The participants simply like playing FPS games. The two youngest participants expressed an extreme level of gaming enjoyment. Gaming is such an integral part of their daily lives, and it is incorporated into other areas of life and vice versa. In response to the question: What impact does video gaming have on other areas of your life, what influence does it have on friends, family, relationships, work or school, one of them explained that he shares his gaming experiences with friends, family, or others, and that gaming has been a part of his school, work, and social networks at various points in his life. He summed it up by saying "Games always come around." The two youngest participants strongly identify with being gamers and gaming seems to be an integral part of their identity.

> *Competition:* "First person shooters are kinda the most basic form of competition – I guess it is the most realistic form of competition."; "Competing against yourself and everybody else, at the same time."; "Just winning and competition satisfies."; "I'll identify who I am in competition with and I'll try to beat them."

The idea of competition in FPS games as a motivator was mentioned and thoroughly discussed by the participants. A competition results in one winner (Miller, 2008), and FPS games definitely provide this opportunity. In team matches, one is either on the winning team or the losing team. In solo matches, you are either

on the top of the score board as the winner or you are not. In this facet, the gaming experience is comparable to a sporting event.

Escape: "Escape from reality."; "You're playing it because you don't want to deal with anything else."; "It's just so easy to go on there and forget about everything else."; "You can make up whoever you want to be."; "You're ignoring everything else – procrastinating on everything else."; "Shirk other duties."; "Where escaping and playing a video game, that give you instant gratification, is more fun than doing dishes."; "It's a little more mind numbing, I guess – you don't need to think as much."

Playing FPS games can provide the opportunity to escape, whether it is just to avoid tackling that stack of dirty dishes or to immerse yourself in the gaming world in order to forget about the many stressors in life or to create an alternate, new identity in an anonymous environment. Gaming provides the opportunity to escape temporarily, just like many other activities in life, such as reading, going dancing, watching TV, and so on.

Socialization: "I prefer to play with people – it's more fun with real people vs. just being isolated and on your own." "It's always fun to have a friend playing."; "Online you can talk to people – you get to know a lot of people."; "I like to talk to different people – it's fun talking to different people."; "Every time we play with different people."; "To be in a party, you can talk, you can

make plans."; "You can play with your friends and talk to them, even if they're in a different country."; "Now you can do it online where you don't have to get everyone together."

Online FPS games provide the opportunity to socialize with other people, whether they are strangers, acquaintances, friends, or family. All of the participants expressed the importance of the social element in their gaming experience. Just like during in-person socialization, the online socialization process can vary greatly. Sometimes people engage in casual small talk, game strategy talk, personal conversations with friends or family, or trash talk.

Achievements: "It's stringing up a couple nice kills or getting an exciting care package or kill streak or something."; "When you play online, you have to rank up…you have to prestige."; "All my buddies had such high ranks so I just started playing on my own online just so that I could be up with them or have an equal rank."; "New levels, new guns."; "As long as my kill/death is nice."

In the gaming world, achievements are some sort of accomplishment gained by the gamer through their actions during game play. In FPS games, this can include unlocking new guns, completing challenges to gain points or trophies, or levelling up or prestiging. Some achievements can give the gamers an advantage once they are achieved, while other achievements just provide bragging rights for

the gamer. The participants expressed the validity of gaining certain achievements when a new game is purchased in order to play at a certain level within the game.

Boredom: "On weekends, if I don't have the kids, then might as well just play, right."; "Gaming is kind of what I'll do if I don't have anything else to do."; "If I'm bored one day."; "If we all have nothing to do, we game."

Boredom was a common motivator mentioned among the participants. Just as any activity, like watching TV, listening to music, or reading a book, can become a go-to activity during periods of boredom, so can playing FPS games. Playing FPS games is simply one choice of activity among many that people decide to participate in, in order to fill blocks of time.

Entertainment: "It's a great way to spend a whole bunch of time and not spend a whole lot of money."; "It becomes a hobby."; "It's cheap entertainment."; I think Xbox is a good thing too cuz you don't get into trouble"

Playing FPS games provides a source of entertainment for these young gamers, at a reasonably low price. After the initial investment in the gaming system itself and any subsequent game purchases, the gamer can continue to enjoy countless hours of entertainment over time. For people living on a budget or saving up to make a big purchase, like a house or a car, it may leave little room for an entertainment budget. Young people can often fall into this category.

Challenge: "It's the challenge of trying to beat the other person at something."; "The challenge of trying to be better than somebody else."; "More challenging, you actually get to play against other people – not so predictable."; "I always challenge my buddies, you know, try to get higher rank and stuff before them."

A challenge can produce multiple winners during one game simply because winning can be achieved on multiple levels (Miller, 2008), such as trying to accomplish both *intra*personal and *inter*personal challenges. The participants mentioned various challenges they create for themselves while playing FPS games, such as trying to achieve a better kill/death ratio, achieving a higher rank, being at the top of the score board, improving their game, being a quicker shot than someone, and so on. These challenges encourage the gamers to improve their own skills, on their own terms.

Routine: "Just usually fall into a routine."; "It can become habit forming too though cuz you just get used to gaming at the same time."; "I've always been playing them, since I was a kid."

Humans are routine creatures and can fall into patterns of behaviour with repeated participation in an activity. All of these gamers began playing video games when they were children and have progressed over time with the various video game developments. One participant explained, "1986 rolled around and everybody got a Nintendo and now we've all grown up with it."

Instant Gratification / Satisfaction: "It's kinda instant gratification – Where you see a target, you pull the trigger, you either kill them or you don't – whenever you get a kill in a game, its satisfying."; "Satisfaction – cuz for that split second you were better than they were." "You get all pumped up. I'm gonna do this today, I'm good!"; "You're on top of the score board, you're pretty happy with that."; "Its repeated success and instant gratification."; "Outsmarting another human is way more satisfying."

Instant gratification and satisfaction both provide positive, pleasurable feelings for the person on the receiving end. FPS games provide many opportunities for instant gratification and satisfaction each time a gamer has better aim, a faster trigger pull, and captures that kill. As well, satisfaction can be achieved each time the gamer is successful within the game, winning a round, having the best kill/death ratio, having the winning kill for his team.

Engaging: "Constant action."; "They do such an amazing job of immersing you, with your gun, the sounds, the atmosphere, the graphics."; "The graphics and all are pretty good."" "It's a little more authentic to what you could do if that was happening in real life."; "Different pace, it's obviously way faster."; "It's an exciting game."; "Get the adrenaline going."; "It's always something different."; "You can play on different maps, different times, different types of

games."; "It's amazing!"; "And that's the most exciting thing…people always

saying some stuff to you for no reason."

The participants expressed that FPS games are very engaging, as the immersive

environment within the game captivates its audience. As Persky and Blascovich

state (2006, p. 173) "(B)ecause users can almost instantaneously influence the form

and content of the game environment, video games are more interactive than other

media". The environment features realistic graphics, actions, and sounds, and the

authentic representation of real combat scenarios. These authors argue that

"qualities, vividness and interactivity, share a positive relationship with

involvement and immersion such that increases in the former lead to increases in

the latter" (Persky & Blascovich, 2006, p. 173). These FPS games do a great job of

drawing the gamers in and then holding their attention during game play. The

participants gave very enthusiastic responses as they talked about how immersive

the FPS environment is and how it motivates them to continue playing that genre of

video game. First person shooter games are very exciting. There is a lot of action,

the games are fast paced, the online conversation is unpredictable, and the

successes within the game can be very gratifying. This level of excitement can

explain how gamers would be highly motivated to play FPS games.

> *Winning:* "Winning. Winning is what it comes down to. It's keeping score.";
> "We don't lose when we are playing online together in a team."; "So we can
> win, you know."; "You're focused on winning."; "It basically comes down to

winning or trying to win."; "That's repeated success and that's a real person on the other side so you feel a sense of 'I beat someone else'."

Who doesn't like to win? Not all the participants used the word 'winning' to describe their motivation to play FPS games; however, the bottom line was the same - some variation of the word, with the same underlying driving force.

Ease of Play: "There's no real waiting. You just kinda sign on and go."; "I can jump in and play for half an hour and quit."; "Good way to fill a block of time without any commitment before or after that."; "You can just play and go."; "You can just play."; "You can just pop on."

First person shooter games are very simplistic to set up for game play, providing the gamer with a real ease of play from beginning to end. Gamers are able to just jump in, play, and quit. However, other genres of video games, such as massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), can be very time consuming and involve more complicated game play. MMORPGs are fantasy based games where each player assumes the role of a character that interacts with other characters within the virtual world, which can involve joining a guild or clan, some degree of teamwork for certain game aspects, adhering to social rules and taboos and engaging in social interaction with other players. (Wikipedia, 2014). This virtual world continues to exist and evolve even when the player is not online. (Wikipedia, 2014).

Fitting In: "I used to play with lots of guys from work – everybody kinda has

it."; "It's a general, I guess, topic to talk about at other social events, I

suppose, or just social interactions with other people."; "I was the kinda guy

to do it cuz everybody had it at work."; "I have to play with them, and all, so

only because of that can we be connected to each other."; "You just want to

chill with your close friends."

Video games are a popular source of entertainment in society nowadays, with

First Person Shooter games being among the top sellers. These young male

participants expressed that video games are intertwined in their social circles, such

as work, social events, and friends. This can involve social conversations about

gaming, making social connections with work mates, or being connected to close

friends by being involved in the circle of activities, like gaming.

Camaraderie: "Unity."; "You get points for your clan."; "Eight of us can sit in

the party and chat to each other."; "When we are alone – we don't have

anyone to watch our back."

Camaraderie is the sense of trust and loyalty among friends. (Business

Dictionary, 2014). The two younger participants expressed this sense of

camaraderie as they described their gaming experiences with their group of friends.

They both talked about working together as a team with their friends during game

play, and having feelings of vulnerability when playing solo. They shared a deep

sense of security when gaming online with friends.

Strategy / Tactics: "I like the strategy of it." "In first person shooter, strategy and tactics comes into play."; "I enjoy the strategy of trying to outflank the other team or coordinate with your fellow players to beat the enemy."; "It will be tactical conversation for me."

First Person Shooter games, like the combat scenarios they are based on, involve a certain degree of strategy and tactics in order to successfully achieve some goal during game play. One participant in particular, the oldest male, felt that strategy and tactics were a very integral part of his gaming strategy. He felt that working together with his fellow teammates in order to coordinate an effective combat strategy was an essential part of FPS games, as it makes the game more enjoyable, and ultimately he becomes really engaged.

Social Conventions among Online Gamers

The social conventions of the online gaming community were examined through the various data collection methods. During the gaming sessions, the social dynamics were witnessed by the researcher, first hand, and these revealed many social conventions. During the focus group session, the concept of social conventions in the online gaming community was discussed, with many valuable insights shared.

When posed with the question, "When playing online, what are certain rules or behaviours that are either expected or classified as normal?" there were some knee-jerk reactions. One participant was quick to reply and said, "That is a complete shit show and a tossup." Other participants were swift to back him up

with, "There's no rules" and "There's none." However, the conversation quickly turned around when one participant chimed in, "Well, there's no camping, no hacking…you use a certain shotgun and…they're bitching." The participants went on to discuss these and other online social conventions that they have observed. One participant observed, "I think most are aware of the conventions and most people probably follow those conventions. I think the few that don't though really stand out."

Greetings and Farewells

When gamers join an online game with known friends, it is customary to say hello and start engaging in small talk. These known friends can include online only friends, as well as personal friendships outside of the gaming environment. There were many examples of this in the online video gaming sessions:

- "Hello, what's up? What's going on?"
- P1: Hey (Name). G1: "Hey (Name). (They continue talking about what game they want to play.) G1: What game are you playing? P1: "Uhhh. I don't know...what do you want to play? G1: I've been playing a lot of hardcore.

As well, people who have been conversing with others online will notify the other gamers of their intent to leave and whether or not they plan to return to game or not later that day. Some examples of this observed during the online gaming sessions were:

- "K, I'll be back y'all. Gotta take a shower and shit. I'll be back on in like 30 minutes or so. Stay on boy."

- "Hey, I have my friend request, I'm about to log off. If you on later, I'm gonna hit you up so we can get a private match and I'll come on and show you what I'm at dog."
- "This is my last game (Name). I'm hungry."
- P1: "I need a break." G1: "See ya."
- "K, I'll be back. Gotta get some grub. I'm hungry."
- "Dude, I'll be right back. I gotta go and get some food. Hold on."
- "I'm gonna head out for now. I'm a speak to you all later."

Among online gamers, it was common to use a person's gamer tag name or portion of it as their name. Gamers would do this when trying to engage with another online gamer not known to them. Here were some examples:

- "What's up (Gamer Tag Name)?
- "Yo, (Gamer Tag Name). I'm gonna add you. Let's back out and go in the same party."
- "Why don't you shut up (Gamer Tag Name)?

Common Game Terms

Among online gamers there is a certain commonly understood vocabulary that is used in the online gaming community. Some of these terms are discussed further below:

- Noob: Player new to online community, who lacks skill or knowledge (Dictionary, 2014);
- Campers: In FPS games, players who position themselves in one spot and waits for other players to come into their target range; repeatedly kill other players;

- Lag: "Time delay between sending a command to the game and your character actually performing the action" (The Average Gamer, 2005 – 2013, Gaming Terminology L section, para. 1);

- Hacker: "A hacker is someone who seeks and exploits weaknesses in a computer system or network" (Wikipedia, 2014, Hacker section, para. 1);

- Spawn: The act of a character popping into existence in the game world (The Average Gamer, 2005 – 2013, Gaming Terminology S section, para. 5);

- Frag: Kill;

- Owned: "Beaten by quite a large margin" (The Average Gamer, 2005 – 2013, Gaming Terminology O section, para. 1);

- Pwned: Owned. One of those strange internet variations that start at typos and become words unto themselves (The Average Gamer, 2005 - 2013); and

- Teabagging: "A nasty practice where a player will crouch over a just-killed player's body, appearing to dangle his private regions in the face of the dead player. A rather tasteless form of victory celebration (The Average Gamer, 2005 – 2013, Gaming Terminology T section, para. 3).

These common terms were heard frequently throughout the gaming session observations. As well, several of these terms were used and/or discussed in the individual interviews and the focus group discussion.

Also, it is customary to use different shortened or abbreviated terms when talking with other online players. Some examples are: HQ (Headquarters), SND (Search and Destroy), TDM (Team Death Match), CTF (Capture the Flag), COD (Call of Duty), Mod (Modification), and SMG (Sub Machine Gun). The participants explained that these shortened terms were often used when saying the full version was just too lengthy to repeat all the time.

Acceptable Gaming Practices

There are some typical behaviours that gamers are expected to follow in the online gaming community, deemed as acceptable behaviours. These include fair game practice, skill appreciation, and respecting private property. Each of these will be discussed further in the following section.

Fair Game Practice

According to the International Fair Play Committee (IFPC, 2015) fair game practice comprises a number of values and practices that are essential to sport and everyday life, including respect for written and unwritten rules and fair competition through just play. These practices and values are relevant in the world of online gaming. Adhering to the written rules involves following the rules within the game and not exploiting technology or other gamers to gain an advantage. Respecting the unwritten rules means that gamers follow the social conventions in the online gaming community to show respect to one's opponents and fellow players. Clans are a sub-culture within the online gaming community that ensure fellow gamers follow both the written and unwritten rules of the game to ensure fair game. One

participant shared "You have a clan – you would make your own social conventions based on that. You'd have your own set – what's acceptable." Another participant added "what they're trying to do is create a level playing field."

Fair competition means that one's "triumph must be scored by absolutely fair means and by honest and just play" (IFPC, 2015, The Essence of Fair Play, para. 6). To just win is not enough, one has to do so knowing they played fair. One participant described this accurately when he shared "Everyone has a different moral compass…I'm not always the best in the room, but as legitimate as I can be." There was lots of discussion about playing fair among the participants, for example,

this was an exchange between two participants during the focus group:

P1: I like to win – fairly. I like to win.

P2: Yeah.

P1: But I don't consider it a win if I have to cheat somehow, like you don't have to be lame about it.

P2: Yeah, there's no fun in winning if you cheat.

P1: If it's dishonest, then it's just dishonest.

These participants felt that cheating was not a necessary part of playing video games and spoiled the fun of the activity.

Skill Appreciation

Skill is "the ability, coming from one's own knowledge, practice, aptitude, etc., to do something well (Dictionary.com, 2015). Appreciation is described as "an ability to understand the worth, quality or importance of something" (Merriam-Webster,

2015). So skill appreciation in online gaming involves recognizing, understanding, and respecting that other gamers have the ability to use their knowledge and strengths within the online gaming environment. This involves giving recognition to others on a job well done. One participant explained "There's going to be tactical conversation, feedback on their performance, like 'Hey you just killed three guys – awesome, nice! Thanks for saving my life!' or something." One participant was describing a moment during one of the gaming sessions and said "For like three games we were on the same team and we were giving each other positive feedback for good performance." It is also nice to have one's own skills appreciated by other gamers. One participant shared how positive feedback impacts them "That's encouraging, if you're getting that, you're gonna keep playing cuz it feels good, it feels better than normal, than just, you know, congratulating yourself." One participant shared "If someone gives you positive feedback, it feels great, you're gonna keep doing it.

Respect Private Property

In virtual environments, people have virtual possessions that are either acquired from time spent earning the achievements or through money used to buy and unlock them. Just as people expect that others will respect their personal property in the real world, the same expectation holds true in the virtual world of the online gaming community. One participant shared that he has friends who have invested a lot of time and money into a certain MMORPG, and there is the threat of someone hacking the account and wiping it clean. He said "I knew a buddy that

went on there every day at 2 in the morning, 2-4 he'd do it cuz at 4 o'clock other people were waking up." Another participant shared that "There was a guy in Germany that deleted his ex – they were getting divorced, deleted her stuff and she sued him for destruction of property, personal property or something like that. And I think she won too." Another participant shared a related story "I heard Bruce Willis was suing Apple because he couldn't transfer his music to his son in his will or something like that." These examples all illustrate how people have a certain degree of ownership involving virtual possessions and expect others to respect their property.

Controversial Online Gaming Strategies

There are some gaming strategies that online players adopt that are highly controversial and border on cheating in the online gaming community, which are deemed unacceptable. The social conventions surrounding these strategies indicate that players who choose to utilize these techniques are breaking the social norms. These will be discussed further in the following section.

Spawn Trapping

Spawn trapping is also commonly referred to as Spawn Camping or Spawn Shopping. It involves a player who sits "within range of a spawn point and kill(s) characters as they appear, often before the newly-spawned players have a chance to get their bearings. Very heavily frowned-upon in most circles." (The Average Gamer, 2005 – 2013, Gaming Terminology S section, para. 7). In FPS games, characters re-spawn at a particular spot on the map after they have been killed. If a

player from the opposite team knows the spawn location and decides to camp at that spot just waiting for players to re-spawn, the players that are re-spawning will not even get a chance to get back in the game. It will just become a vicious circle of re-spawning and getting killed, over and over. During the gaming sessions, one gamer became upset because he was spawn trapped. This was the scenario: During one game, one online gamer had 92 kills and only 11 deaths, so the other gamers noticed something weird was going on. One gamer called out, "Why is he hiding over there? Fuckin' loser! Jesus Christ! I can't even do anything. He's just spawn shopping." The other online players start dropping out of the game.

Hacking

Hacking in the world of video games involves a player capitalizing on a glitch in the system or exploiting the technology to create some sort of an advantage. During the gaming sessions, the word hacker was used a lot when other gamers witnessed things happening in the game that do not normally happen unless someone is hacking. Many gamers were very verbal about their dislike for hacking. One participant said, "I won't give the guy the dignity. (He backs out of the game.) It's uncalled for…he had some hacks going on…Oh, as if it dumped me back in the same game. (He backs out of the game again.)" During another game, an online gamer was very upset and said, "I just opened up a full fucking 595 clip on him and he didn't go down! Someone's hacking…Yeah, someone's hacking." During the individual interviews, hacking was discussed further with the participants. One participant talked about the expensive modded remote controls that some online

gamers buy, which have modifications such as auto aim, fast reload, rapid fire, quick knife, and many others that give players an obvious unfair advantage. One participant concluded, "I hate hackers."

Camping

Camping is another very controversial action taken by online gamers that creates negative reactions from other gamers. During one gaming session, one online gamer was very upset about campers on the other team and strongly expressed his views on the issue. The gamer said, "Fucking camper, man! Fucking camper! Use your riot shield more, you fucking campers. I never seen a bigger bunch of pussies. I don't want to prestige man, then I'll have to start all over. I'd rather be the best fucking hunter at the zoo." This gamer continued to express his dislike for the players on the other team who continued to camp throughout the match. Another participant stated, "People just lay down on the ground sniping and camping. You just sit in front of them so they can't see." At other times during the gaming sessions, online gamers would call out the camper's location, spoiling his hiding location. One participant shares, "There's a guy by the plane. Still a guy behind all three of you. Oh, there's 2 in there. Another guy in the stairs by the plane." During another game, a participant yells, "Whoa! There's a guy in the tanker…by the propane tank."

The participants themselves differentiated between two different types of camping. In one type, gamers are strategically using their skills to guard an important object in a game like capture the flag, where the objective is to prevent

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the other team from stealing your flag and taking it back to their base. The participants explained that this is an acceptable form of camping. One participant said, "You cannot just go there and kill other guys, in real life that doesn't happen, you know?" Another participant explained his camping strategy, "You're camping the flag and you're supposed to be defending…doing the objective and you're defending the flag." In the other type, a player sits in one spot waiting to kill any other players that pass by, not requiring any skill level. This is the type of camping described in the examples above that infuriated the other players. One participant shared, "Usually when you're getting camped out like that, I just switch games." Another participant chimed in, "Are you really supposed to leave a game, but if it's so frustrating that you're getting camped out so bad."

Boosting

Boosting involves "having other people assist you in getting leader board position or achievements by having other people help you in ways that go counter to the game's design" (Urban Dictionary, 1999 – 2014, Top Definition section, para. 1). Boosting is frowned upon in the gaming community because it suggests the player isn't skilled enough to rank up legitimately on their own (Urban Dictionary, 1999 – 2014). During the focus group discussion, the participants talked about players who boost. One participant said, "Kids that just boost. What the heck is the point?...Yeah, just to unlock the achievements or piss people off…K/D gets out of control…But it's not a legit K/D." Another participant shared that, "there was a guy on YouTube that does it and he goes around and busts people who are boosting and

gets their accounts reset." The participants discussed the difference between different kinds of boosting and how it impacted the game differently. This was the discussion that ensued: P1 "Where as if you're noob boosting, well now you're totally wrecking the game." P2 "Yeah cuz you end the match." P1 "You end the match and totally disregard everything else that was done in that match. So when you're not affecting someone else's game play directly, it doesn't matter as much."

Noob Tubing

Noob tube is a grenade launcher attachment that is often used by new players because it requires little to no skill or effort, but provides a high level of destruction. "This is seen as a cheap weapon only acceptable for use by the worst of players at this particular game" (Urban Dictionary, 1999 – 2014, Top Definition section, para. 3). When asked about the social conventions in online gaming, one participant enthusiastically said, "Don't Noob Tube! No Noob Tubing!" During one gaming session, one participant expresses, "Fucking Noob Tuber! Guy can't even fucking shoot straight!" One online gamer apologizes during a game for killing his fellow teammate, "Sorry, (Name). Yeah I shot a Noob Tube down at the guy planting. and it killed you too when the car pulled up."

Using Certain Weapons

People have strong opinions about the use of certain weapons. One participant shared, "There's a convention about don't use that shotgun." Online gamers freely expressed their dislike for particular weapons and there were many examples of this observed during the online gaming sessions. During one gaming

session the following exchange happened: G1 "Wow, you used ACR, really?" P1

"Yeah, really I used ACR." G1: "With a silencer, A & B, garbage." In another gaming

scenario, one online gamer says, "He's using a fucking riot shield. That's funny.

How the fuck do you think the riot shield is a brilliant fucking move? How much fun

is that? It's like fucking masturbating all day. You know, it's not the same,

man...He's a fucking slug, using his fucking riot shield." Another gamer comments,

"At least he doesn't have the shot gun out now. He was running with the fucking

shot gun before. Oh no. (Gamer Tag Name) got the shot gun out now. Went from the

riot shield to the shot gun."

Online Language

A wide variety of communication styles are quite apparent in listening to the

online conversations that video game players engage in while playing. One

participant shared his thoughts on the subject, "If somebody complains about the

way they are talking, some people will say, you know, sorry. Other people will say if

you don't like it, get the fuck out." He continued by saying, "Mute me. I've said that

a couple of times too. If you don't like what I am saying, just mute me. You have the

choice. Like I don't have to, I shouldn't have to shut up, if you can mute me. That's

why it's there, right?" Another participant shared some of his insight about the

online conversation, "I think a lot of people lose their manners online...At the same

time, you know you're probably surrounded by guys and guys can be crude...A lot of

guys talk smack...there's the guys who talk smack and are genuinely angry at kind

of everything…But then there's other guys who are more casual with their smack talk and then it's kinda funny."

Swearing is very common as gamers were heard using the whole spectrum of swear words when something happened to them in the game such as getting killed, when they were excited or bragging about successful game plays, or when they would swear at other players in anger, to tease, or in casual conversation. Swearing occurred repeatedly during each gaming session observation. Only one objection to language was heard, when one gamer said, "I got my sister here, you guys." Nobody acknowledged him or his complaint, and the gamer did not speak again. In the other swearing instances, the other gamers either didn't acknowledge the swearing or engaged with the player using their own repertoire of swear words.

During the gaming sessions, the researcher observed inappropriate and offensive racial comments exchanged between the online video gamers. When asked about the online conversations, one participant explained, "I would describe it as very profane and racist…and comedic. (Laughs)" Some comments were exchanged back and forth between players, and appeared to be part of a gentle ribbing among them. For example, two players who start playing online together begin chatting about their game play, challenging one another, and joking around about their gamer tag names. Some of their conversation does include racially-related comments. Here is an excerpt:

P1: 15 and 20, really? Come on man…15 and 20?
G1: I don't see yo ass, nigger.
P1: 15 and 20? I ain't no nigger.

G1: I don't see your ass. I'm a nigger, that's why I got Obama up here, nigger.

P1: Uh huh. Well, I'm Black where it counts.

P1: You ever play Gears of War?

G1: Yeah, that's my shit.

P1: Yeah, I used to play Gears of War, I swear every guy was a Black guy from the south and I always felt out of place – the one White boy from Canada.

G1: Canada. You from Canada? You Jewish then, dog.

P1: (Laughs) I'm – (Laughs). Yes, I'm Jewish? Me in my igloo with my huskies. Jewish?

Their conversation was really a friendly banter back and forth, and even ended with G1 sending P1 a friend request and inviting him to play online with him later.

However, in many other circumstances, the racial comments were inappropriate and harsh. In the middle of a game, one gamer says, "Feel like raping some niggers." In another game, a different gamer mockingly says with an accent, "We don't need no fucking niggers." During another gaming session, several players team up and continually make racially-related comments to another player that identifies himself as a Black male. This is an excerpt from their exchange:

G1: Oh the Black man doesn't have to go to work and he can play the Calls of Duty.

G2: (Laughs). Collecting welfare.

G1: (Laughs)

G3: Really? I didn't know that. I'll quit my job then and start collecting welfare.

G1: Holy shit!

G2: Ah, poor Black man.

In the exchange leading up to and following this, the gamer who is at the receiving end of the comments is clearly offended and defensive about the offensive comments directed towards him.

Another type of conversation heard online involves sexually-related comments. These comments range on a spectrum, as well. Some examples are:

- "Hey, you're family ain't rich, dog. I was with your mom last night and she took me to Mc Donald's." "Yeah, my mom puts out pretty good."
- "Oh man, I was just flickin' my bean."
- "Why don't you let me jerk you off?"
- "I'm just gonna straight pull my dick out and face fuck you."
- "If I ain't bleedin', you ain't pleasin'. If it ain't hurtin', I'm not squirtin'. Freaky rhymes will make you squirm!"
- "I wanna go to jail voluntarily just so I can get raped. Come on boys, come and rape me."
- "There's a pitcher and catcher in the gay world, so will you please respect that."

Overall, during the gaming session observations, the sexual comments encompassed a minimal amount of the overall conversation. Typically, the same one or two people would continually make some sexual comments over the course of a few games. The majority of the other gamers either did not respond at all or engaged with them in a joking manner.

How Do People Create and Learn These Social Conventions?

Social conventions are continuously evolving over time, with other societal changes. There are various avenues where people can learn about the social conventions in online gaming. One participant stated, "You get told. If you're doing

something really wrong, you'll get told." In some scenarios, other gamers will just very blatantly tell another gamer that they are breaking a social convention. During one gaming session an online gamer said in a very sarcastic tone, "Camp more. Camp more bud. Camp more. Camp." He was referring to a player on the opposite team, who was using camping as his gaming strategy, which does not represent fair game practice. "In video gaming, camping is a tactic where a player obtains a static strategic position of advantage…among many players, camping is considered tantamount to cheating, especially in deathmatch-type first-person shooter games" (Camping, 2014, C section, para. 2). In situations like this, other players will often express their dislike of other's gaming strategies.

During the focus group session one participant stated, "Well, you've been doing it for awhile, so you know everything, pretty much." The participants discussed how they had been gaming all of their lives, growing up with video games from a young age, and evolving with the changes in the video game industry over time. So for a lot of these young gamers, learning the social conventions is something that just happened gradually over time, without conscious realization. People are influenced and learn how to behave from their interactions within these various environments. New or inexperienced players will learn gaming conventions as they play in that environment and are exposed to them. One participant said, "As you play of course, you learn…most of it you just learn by playing."

One of the more unpleasant ways of learning that you broke a social convention is to be reported and/or banned from Xbox Live. As in real life, there are

consequences put in place on Xbox Live in relation to certain negative behaviours.

Xbox can provide suspensions for both Xbox consoles and Xbox Live accounts.

"While some Xbox LIVE account suspensions may be issued alongside console

suspensions, they are not issued with every single suspension" (Microsoft, 2014,

Frequently Asked Questions section, para. 3). Xbox Live users must follow The

Terms of Use and Code of Conduct, in order to keep their accounts in good standing

and to avoid suspension (Microsoft, 2014). These documents outline appropriate

behavior, inappropriate conduct, and how to deal with an obnoxious player that is

breaching the Xbox Live conditions. "Repeat egregious violations: Multiple actions

taken on accounts on the console by the Enforcement team for disrupting the

service or impacting users" is one way for a user's console to be issued a suspension

(Microsoft, 2014, Xbox LIVE Policies on Console Suspensions section, para. 3).

There are opportunities for gamers to create online gaming environments

that provide customized games and therefore, stricter social conventions. As one

participant explained, "They do that because they want their own rules, their own

stipulations. It's played a certain way." Playing in these customized gaming

environments is strictly voluntary. People can rent servers and all gamers must

adhere to an agreed upon set of rules in order to play on there or get kicked out of

the game. Also, people have clans and gamers can sign up for clan battles, for

example a 4 vs. 4 clan battle. One participant's insight was, "What they're trying to

do is create a level playing field…they are accountable to each other." A level

playing field allows gamers to more legitimately assess their skills, it provides a fair

fight with like minded individuals, and it allows gamers to have control over their game. As well, since people belong to these smaller social circles, they are more invested and obligated to respect the other members.

Consequences: Not Adhering to Social Conventions

As with any social conventions, not all members in a group will conform to all of the unwritten rules or standards. One participant eloquently stated, "I think most are aware of the conventions and most people probably follow these conventions. I think the few that don't though, really stand out." Consequences for not adhering to the social conventions of the online gaming community can vary greatly, depending on the people involved, the violation, and/or the circumstances surrounding the incident.

One participant explained that "some people don't care cuz they do it themselves every once in a while so they're not gonna complain about it, right?" So these people may just choose to brush off the violation and do nothing in response. Other people may verbally comment about the violation. Many examples of this were observed during the gaming session observations. One online gamer yelled, "That's what you get for spawn shopping…just a spawn shopping piece of shit!" The gamer negatively commented on the violation of this social convention, and then moved on and continued gaming. During a gaming session another gamer said, "Some guy's camping by our flag." In this circumstance, the participant noticed the violation and simply reveals the other player's location, thus stopping that player from camping and further breaking that social convention. One participant shared a

valid method for dealing with breaches of various social conventions: "And it doesn't matter that he is saying those kinds of things because you can just get up and leave after…there's the ability to just turn off the game and leave."

Another method for dealing with social convention violations is available to every player. With the touch of a button, any player can be muted, meaning that the other online gamers can still hear them talk but the muted player's voice will no longer be heard by the offended player. All the participants were aware that this option was available to them and admitted to using it in various circumstances. This was observed during the gaming sessions as well. At various points in different gaming sessions, some online player would start playing music through their headset so the other gamers could hear it. At other times, there would be a lot of background noise picked up through an online gamer's microphone, including children talking loudly or crying, inaudible conversation between multiple people, or various odd sounds. The participants would simply just mute that player and solve the problem.

In some scenarios, online gamers may say something that genuinely offends another person, whether that was their original intention or not. When describing the online interactions people have while gaming, one participant explained, "They can get away with saying racist shit or stuff like that. I've said stuff before and then the guy was upset and I've apologized. But you're so used to it in online gaming, you know, everyone's dropping racist stuff right away in the game." People have

feelings, whether they are socially interacting in person or online, and sometimes an apology is in order when one person has offended another.

There are more overt methods for dealing with the violation of social conventions in these and other circumstances. Online gamers can give negative feedback and affect a player's reputation. One participant said, "you can tag people….as, uh….cheating, you think they're cheating or they're exploiting." This way, other gamers can see that person's reputation and it could work as a method to hold someone publically accountable for their actions. You can also block another player from communicating with you by using the Block Communications feature on the Xbox (Microsoft, 2014). It is a very simple procedure and you can report or block another player either during or after game play.

In some circumstances it may be necessary for a gamer to take further, more serious action. During the focus group discussion, a participant shared that, "some guy's saying racist things and people don't like it, you can vote him out." One participant explained, "You can report them…then you don't need to play with them again." Another participant added, "Plus, if your 10 friends report him, he gets banned for like 10 or 15 days." In order to play with an Xbox Live membership for online game play, one needs to agree to the Terms of Use. Code of Conduct violations such as cheating or tampering, any type of harassment, communication that is offensive or discriminatory, and others are taken very seriously. Xbox will investigate these reported violations and take any necessary action including

temporary Xbox Live bans, permanent Xbox Live suspensions, and console suspensions.

Are All Consequences Equal?

The consequences of breaking online social conventions were examined in relation to the gamers' experience levels and age. One participant felt that "Tolerance on new players is really based on the person…I don't care if a guy is new or something like that. It doesn't matter to me." Another participant shared their viewpoint on new gamers: "I don't get harsh on someone cuz they're probably learning like everyone. Everyone was a beginner at some point, so why pick on them, really? Other people like to just throw their faces in it." New or inexperienced players can be on the receiving end of a wide variety of responses in regards to the breach of any social conventions.

The age range of online FPS gamers varies greatly. One participant explained, "If there's kids, I don't swear at all. I just be nice to them. They join our party sometime, I kick them out cuz I don't want to talk to kids, you know, like I'm with older people in the party." When referring to young gamers, another participant said "I'm more inclined to go easy on that person." The participants shared that muting younger players, if they are being loud and obnoxious, in order to avoid listening to them is another effective strategy. The participants discussed egging the younger players on if they were deemed cool, and that this provided a source of entertainment, as well.

One participant observed that some gamers do not tolerate newer players well and shared some of the online opinions: "Some of them: 'You are a NOOB, just get out of here. You don't belong here.'" Some online gamers have a low tolerance for younger players, so they may be harsher in their approach to dealing with them. One participant explained, "Cuz there is hard core gamers in there and the new player – hard core players talk shit to the little players, you know – they are stupid." Inexperienced and younger gamers can be subjected to a wide variety of reactions from other gamers. "It kinda depends on how you're feeling at the time," shared one participant. The participants discussed how factors such as their mood, game successes/failures, online interactions, and so on can influence their reaction to a situation.

How Do the Motivations to Play Online Games Influence the Social Conventions of the Online Gaming Community?

Motivations to play online games can influence the social conventions. Gamers have various motivations to play online games, which can change from day to day and even from game to game. The participants all provided many different motivations that they have for playing online FPS games, such as competition, gaining achievements, fun, or socialization. For example, a gamer's motivation to play one day is to win. However, once he begins playing with an online group he realizes they are beating him over and over again. He decides to start spawn trapping players on the other team in order to increase his score and win. This player's motivation to win prompts him to break a social convention. This has the

potential to influence the conventions in the online gaming community. During one gaming session, a participant's motivation to play was for fun. He observed another player camping and sniping, which he did not like so he resolved the problem. The participant says, "That was fun. There he is. People just lay down on the ground sniping and camping. You just sit in front of them so they can't see." The participant's own motivation for fun prompted him to react to the other player who was breaking the social convention by camping, which influenced that player's actions by causing him to move and stop the other player from breaking the social convention.

The gamers' own motivations have the potential to influence the social conventions involving the acceptable gaming practices of fair game, skill appreciation, and respecting private property. For example, one gamer's motivation to play is winning, but recognizes that he will not be able to win unless he breaks a rule and decides to use a modified controller. This creates a dishonest situation that is not fair to the other players and undermines their gaming skills. This situation could create a shift in the acceptable gaming practices if other gamers feel that their skills and the promise of a fair game are no longer part of the social conventions in online gaming. One participant shared a story about how his own motivation to socialize with friends can influence his game play – a friend logs on and joins him online, so now his motivation switches to strategy/ tactics. He said "If I'm playing with someone, a friend, I would probably try to stick with them in the game…and that's just so I can see what they do, they can see what I do and I can

help him or he can help me." Playing with friends and respecting the gaming practices could serve to reinforce the social conventions.

In the focus group, the participants discussed how some people hold clan matches, where one clan battles another clan. The strict rules on these servers provide the gamers the opportunity to fulfill their own motivations, while tightly controlling the environment in order to prevent the social conventions from being broken. Here is an excerpt from the focus group discussion:

> P1: If you're really competitive that way, like really competitive, that you have a clan, you would make your own social conventions based on that. You'd have your own set – what's acceptable. Like there is clan matches, where clans take on clans. Like I have been on servers where they say 'Ok, in 20 minutes we are kicking everyone out cuz we're having a clan battle.' They do that because they want their own rules, their own stipulations. It's played a certain way.
>
> P2: And you have to follow all the rules.
>
> P1: Follow all the rules. There's time limits and this and that. So that group of people take it upon themselves to separate themselves from everyone else…Their own little world, their own servers, and their own…
>
> P3: Rules.
>
> P4: Well, what they're trying to do is create a level playing field.
>
> P5: Yeah.
>
> P4: Cuz they're trying to eliminate the things that are being cheap.

This example shows how the gamers' motivations can reinforce the social conventions since the game rules in clan matches are clearly established and adhered to, which reinforces conformity.

How Do Social Conventions in the Online Gaming Community Influence Gamers' Motivations to Play Online Games?

There was evidence collected to indicate that social conventions in the online gaming community can influence the gamers' original motivations during game play. One participant was sharing a story about how other gamers, in their quest to reinforce the social conventions and have fair game play, would not play against him.

He shared the following:

"People used to disconnect their Internet so it didn't count against their score…You just hit dashboard real quick and you would just timeout and it wouldn't count as a loss, right? So I was playing and I had like two hundred wins and maybe twenty losses and people would start not playing me. They would get to the match making and they would back out because they thought I was just disconnecting, right? So finally they patched it so it showed the disconnects and I had maybe two or three disconnects from when I actually did it."

So whatever their original motivations were, the gamers were being influenced by the social conventions, influencing their gaming motivations.

As well, engaging in unacceptable social conventions in online gaming can influence the gamers' original motivation during game play. One participant shared a story about other gamers teaming up on him and camping out: "I've gone on when I used to try to prestige. The fastest way to prestige is just to unlock more guns and

attachments on guns, so you're playing with a crappy gun, let's say like a gun that you're not used to. And exactly, there's three guys that are really good and you say screw it and take out a gun you know and then for the rest of the night you're not levelling up your shit." The participants continued to discuss camping and another participant shared, "I went from playing casual to now I just really want to kick that guy's ass." Another participant chimes in, "Yeah – revenge, like you said."

Another unacceptable social convention that evokes strong reactions from other gamers is spawn trapping. The participants talked about spawn trapping and how frustrating it can become when another player continually breaks this social convention. The participants talked about gaming to level up or gain points and then how being spawn trapped changes their motivations to game. The following excerpt was taken from the focus group discussion:

> P1: Well that makes a difference though right if you're trying to level up or you got a huge gamer score or points going up and it's a long match…You'd be more inclined to stay just to get the points.
> P2: Yeah, you might tough it out. But it depends how bad it is.
> P3: That's true.
> P2: Cuz I've been spawn camped to where you can't spawn.
> P3: Oh it's just frustrating.
> P2: Yeah. When you do spawn they get three or four kill streaks going and they're all choppers, so it's like well yeah, I'm not going to get a single kill this match so I'm just gonna leave.

The participants explained how spawn trapping can become extremely frustrating, which in turn can easily influence their original motivations to play.

The participants discussed the influence these social conventions have on their motivations to play. Overall, it seems that the unwritten rules of online gaming govern the choices people make while playing, thereby influencing their motivations. Here is a sample of the focus group conversation:

> I: So how would you guys say that these social rules or these rules online influence why and how you play?
>
> P1: Well I like to win…fairly…I like to win…
>
> P2: Yeah.
>
> P1: But I don't consider it a win if I have to cheat somehow, like you don't have to be lame about it.
>
> P2: Yeah, there's no fun in winning if you cheat.
>
> P1: If it's dishonest, it just dishonest.

Engaging in unacceptable social conventions related to controversial gaming strategies, such as spawn trapping, camping, hacking, boosting, and noob tubing elicited strong reactions from the participants, as well as other online gamers. These rules impact the choices players make when they decide whether or not to adhere to and follow these rules and how they will react to other players' decisions to follow or break the social conventions.

Connections between the Online Gaming Community and the Real World

The online gaming community does not operate as a closed system, but has connections and relationships that carry over into the real physical world. One concept that was discussed was the idea of virtual theft. Some gamers invest a lot of time and money into collecting certain materials, equipment, or character-related items, only to have their accounts hacked and wiped clean. One participant shared

a story about gamers who play role-playing games, such as World of Warcraft where players collect materials and build their character's online world.

One participant shared the following story about role-playing games:

They'll get up at 3 in the morning just to do that before work or something like that. I knew a buddy that went on there every day at 2 in the morning, 2-4 he'd do it cuz at 4 o'clock other people were waking up. So then when somebody's account gets hacked and they lose all that time and money – well that's kind of an investment in a hobby, right? They lose everything.

In the real world, this would be comparable to somebody building a shed to keep their hobby equipment, such as bikes, snowboards, skis, and kayaks, investing a lot of time and money. One night a thief breaks into this shed and steals all of this equipment, devastating the owner. Virtual possessions have value to the people who invest the money and time into acquiring them, and apparently enough value to prompt others to steal this property.

During the focus group discussion, the participants discussed spending money versus time on various types of online games. This included selling online gaming accounts to other gamers for money. One participant shared, "I have a buddy who sold his online account…for 2 grand in the 90s…I sold mine for $250." The participants talked about hack lobbies, where gamers can go online and pay someone to get points for their account and boost their ranking. The discussion included talking about paying money to unlock certain game aspects or to simply have in-game spending money. Here is an excerpt from the focus group discussion:

P1: "Like in World of Warcraft. If you can buy gold straight from them and they just digitally make it and give it to you.

P2: "That's what they do in Battlefield. I don't know about in Call of Duty. You can buy – that's right, so yeah, you pay $20 to unlock everything already."

P1: "Yeah, it's extra income. Its lots of income for them, so why wouldn't they do that? Like if I give you 10 bucks, you give me 10 million gold."

The participants continued to talk about other gaming platforms, such as iPhones and computers, where people also invest time and money within the game.

The topic of time spent on gaming was discussed further with the participants and how this impacts their life in the real world. Here are some examples:

- One participant explained "Well that's why I don't play RPGs, like World of Warcraft or Star Wars Republic, or whatever, because it's difficult to limit that time. I may not spend as much time with (significant other's name), or I might not get chores done…so yeah, I do limit my time."

- Another participant said "Video games have caused a lot of problems in my life from just relationships to, you know, it gets to the point where you're playing it because you don't want to deal with anything else." He continued to share "I've completely changed compared to a couple years ago, and that's all based on my own personal experiences…I have stronger boundaries when it comes to that kind of stuff."

- One participant said "Sometimes I stay all night when I'm not, when I have nothing to do. I just sit and play games with all of my friends."

-When one participant was asked whether he limits the amount of time spent on gaming, he laughed and replied "I don't have that issue." Another participant's reply was "yeah a little bit. Sometimes just due to other – requirements, I suppose. Like going to work."

-One participant shared that video games has an impact on his life as it "annoys the wife cuz I'm not paying attention to her."

Spending time on video games, as with other types of entertainment and leisure activities naturally takes time away from other activities and people in the real world. The participants shared how choosing to play certain video games, including the selection of certain games, has impacted their lives – from neglecting household chores and obligations to not spending enough time with significant others leading to arguments, unhappy spouses, and even marital breakdown.

Another interesting finding revealed that some people who play online games together end up developing real, in-person relationships. One participant shared that he knew a female gamer who met and dated people she had met online while playing video games. The participant explained that, "She got involved with somebody online playing an online game, and she has a history of that…I've seen first hand how people get so attached to somebody cuz they're online playing a game, then they start talking and all that stuff…Happens all the time." He continued to talk about situations where people are married and end up being unfaithful in their marriages as a result of their online and in-person encounters that result from online gaming.

One participant shared a story about online relationships:

That's different though than two people who are married that start talking

that play a game, but they live like in the States and one here and then they

just start spending every minute playing a game together and talking and

bitching about each other's lives and making each other feel good. And then

all of a sudden – boom!

The online gaming community does have a social component, which provides real

opportunities for people to develop various types of relationships. As with other

online socialization avenues, like dating websites and social networking sites, online

gaming provides a social setting where real inter-personal relationships can develop

and carry over into the real world.

An Interesting Finding – The Anonymity of Online Gaming

Throughout the data collection process, one particularly interesting finding

was discovered and could be explored further in future research. Every participant

mentioned and discussed the anonymous nature of the online gaming community.

When talking about online social interactions and accountability to others, the topic

was pondered and everyone had a lot to say about the matter. Here are some quotes

from various participants:

-"If I just run a game, if I beat everyone, I won't be like 'Ohhhh, ha ha you
guys suck.' That's just like – I wasn't brought up like that. So I don't know if
it's an upbringing thing or cuz you're anonymous on the internet that you can
just do whatever you want without repercussions."
-"Human nature still exists in online gaming. I think it's probably amplified
because you're anonymous."

-"The anonymous factor of it, I guess makes people more loud-mouthed."

-"People are lying all the time about who they are."

-"You can make up whoever you want to be."

-"There's no repercussions to any of your actions."

-"They are for sure behaving differently because they're hiding behind a TV screen, computer screen, whatever you want to call it, a controller."

-"You can't see their face, you don't know who they are, you don't know where they live. So it totally changes their dynamic, I guess."

-'I think it's funny that people are jerks. They just sound like idiots when they're jerks. So to me, I just don't want to sound like that."

What's interesting is that there is definitely an anonymous factor to the online gaming community, yet many gamers still choose to interact in a socially responsible manner and make positive social connections with other online gamers.

Summary of Main Findings

This study revealed many different motivating factors to play online FPS games. Some of the motivating factors were common among all of the participants and were more obvious motivators. Playing FPS games online is fun, entertaining, engaging, provides many opportunities for socialization, is challenging, provides competition, eases boredom, provides opportunity to escape temporarily, gain achievements, and win. Other motivating factors revealed may not have been as obvious but are strong driving factors for the participants. Ease of play allows gamers to enter and exit game play easily and for shorter blocks of time. These participants valued fitting in with their peers and the accompanying sense of camaraderie, and gaming really has become an integral part of their social networks. Gaming on certain days/ times has even become a regular part of their

daily routines. As well, strategy/ tactics involved in FPS games adds another level of mastery and challenge to the game, similar to the real-life scenarios that these games are based on.

Within the online gamer cub-culture, several social conventions were discovered. Some of these conventions carry over from other aspects of life, such as using greetings, farewells, and gamer names to acknowledge other people. The language is part of the unique sub-culture of the online gamer, as there are many common gaming terms, such as noob, lag, and spawn that are well accepted, understood, and used among these online FPS players. There are acceptable gaming practices and conventions surrounding fair game practice, skill appreciation, and respect for people's private property. Also, there are some controversial gaming strategies that some gamers engage in, which are viewed by most other gamers as cheating and as breaking social conventions. These include spawn trapping, hacking, camping, boosting, noob tubing, and using certain weapons.

The online language varies greatly among online players. As part of the online gamer sub-culture, swearing was heard very often and seems to be a socially acceptable method of expressing oneself during online gaming. There was also a lot of trash/ smack talk where the gamers tease one another in a friendly manner. Racially-related comments and stereotypes were commonly heard among the online gamers. Many of these comments appeared to be accepted by the other gamers as friendly jokes; however, some of these comments crossed the line when other gamers became genuinely offended. One other area of conversation, which

encompassed only a very small portion of the gaming sessions was sexually related. However, the conversation was isolated to only a couple of individuals, as most of the gamers did not engage in these conversations.

This study indicates that the social conventions in the online gaming community influence gamers' motivations to play and vice versa. Breaking the social conventions during online game play, especially engaging in any of the controversial gaming strategies like spawn trapping or boosting, can strongly influence the player's original motivations to play and evoked strong reactions from the participants and other online gamers. The social conventions help guide the participants' choices throughout their gaming experience. In contrast, the motivations of gamers can have an influence on the social conventions in the online gaming community. The participants revealed many different motivating factors to play online FPS games, which can change quickly depending on the circumstances. If one's motivating factor overrides the importance of the social convention, one may choose to break the social convention, which could have potential long-term effects on the sustainability of these conventions in the future. The emergence of clans has been one way to ensure that the gamers adhere to the rules and social conventions while gaming, while serving their own motivating factors.

The online gaming community does not operate in isolation from the real world, even though it is physically separate. There are events that happen in the online gaming community that carry over into the real physical world and impact the people involved. Online theft is a real problem, as these digital possessions have

real value. As well, people invest both time and money into these online games, which uses resources from the real world and can impact their lives. Time spent on gaming takes time away from other activities and people in the real world, potentially impacting completion of daily obligations or creating problems within interpersonal relationships. In addition, sometimes people develop romantic relationships through online socializations with other gamers. This could be a positive or negative experience, depending on the existing circumstances and the future developments of the relationship. What is interesting is that the online gaming community provides an anonymous environment, where many people have positive interactions.

Chapter Five - Discussion and Conclusion

This research paper provides insight into the social aspects of the online gaming community. The research was designed to specifically examine the motivating factors driving young adult male gamers to play online FPS games on the Xbox and Play Station gaming consoles, the social conventions that are present within this online gaming community, how these factors influence and impact each other, and the relationship between the virtual gaming world and the real world. There were four main research questions posed. The first research question examined the motivators to play online first person shooter games among young, male gamers. The second question looked at the social conventions among online video gamers, including how people create and learn these conventions, the consequences of breaking a social convention, and how this varies with age or experience level. The third question examined the relationship between these motivations and social conventions, by looking at how they influence and impact one another. The fourth question looked at the relationship between the virtual gaming world and the real physical world.

This study employed an ethnographic research approach, and in doing so the researcher was able to gain valuable insight into the online gamers' world. Through being immersed in this environment, the researcher was able to get an insider's perspective and experience being part of the online gaming community. Overall, there is a different experience every time a person games. This variation depends on the group of people playing each game. Some people are very chatty and have a

constant conversation going, whether he/she is talking to somebody else or even commenting about his/her own game play. On the other end of the spectrum, there are the quieter people who speak occasionally. There are people who will carry on conversations with the people present in their real physical environment, and others who will play their music loudly enough for everyone to hear over their microphone. Just like in the real physical world, people show and represent their personalities in different ways at different times. This creates a very eclectic environment and a unique gaming experience each time.

Taking an ethnographic approach to this research allowed the researcher to analyze the data from the participants' perspective. The researcher had gained first hand knowledge in the online gaming community through her previous gaming experiences with family and friends, and she was present in the environment during the online gaming sessions. She was able to understand and relate to the experiences and knowledge that the participants were sharing with her. This allowed her to look beyond what the participants and other online gamers were saying and to collectively gather information about the culture of the gaming environment. According to Goulding (2005) "ethnographers aim to look beyond what people say to understand the shared system of meanings we call 'culture'" (p. 298).

Motivations to Play Online First Person Shooter (FPS) Games

There were a variety of factors motivating these young males to play online FPS games. Socialization was a strong motivational force for the participants in this study. All of the participants expressed the importance of this factor in their video

gaming decisions, including influencing such decisions as new video game purchases, selecting a video game platform, the amount of time spent on gaming, and how gaming has become an integral part of other social experiences. During the online gaming sessions, the researcher observed that the participants and the other online gamers engaged with each other frequently. Often, the same group of gamers stayed in the same gaming lobby and played several games together, sometimes leading to new online friend requests. Socialization with one's peers is highly valued in society and within the gamer culture, which shows how societal attitudes and values of the gamer culture influence the people in this environment. Human Ecology Theory holds that people are interconnected with their environments and operate as a system of mutual influence. Hoffman and Nadelson (2010) found that "nearly two-thirds (66%) of participants played video games with others…socialization varied broadly and were derived in several ways" (p. 261).

Socialization was a common theme in previous studies examining the motivations of online gamers (Barnett et al., 1997; Demetrovics and colleagues, 2011; Olson, 2010; Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006; Wan & Chiou, 2006; Westwood & Griffiths, 2010; Yee, 2006). Socialization encompassed a wide range of activities. These included: conversing with other unknown gamers online about simple game-related topics; adding new, unknown gamers to friend's lists and getting to know each other personally and becoming friends; joining clans and playing regularly with the same group of gamers; and playing with known friends and/ or family. Hoffman and Nadelson (2010) found that their "data revealed socializing to be a

prevailing reason for continuing interest in video gaming" (p. 262). Socialization not only motivates gamers to play online FPS games, but it proceeds to motivate them to continue gaming. "Some of our participants clearly admitted they would *not* play video games if not for the persuasion of others and the social aspect of gaming" (Hoffman & Nadelson, 2010, p. 262).

Some other commonly mentioned motivators among the participants were fun, achievement, and a source of entertainment. These males play these FPS games simply because they like them and enjoy playing them. Previous research found the common motivating factors to play video games were fun (Hoffman & Nadelson, 2010; Jansz & Tanis, 2007; Westwood & Griffiths, 2010), achievement (Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006; Wan & Chiou, 2006), and for entertainment (Wan & Chiou, 2006; Westwood & Griffiths, 2010). One participant summed up his opinion very well by saying "If I'm gonna play it, I'm gonna enjoy it, you know?" At several points in the gaming sessions, the participants were seen smiling, heard laughing, telling jokes, and appeared to be enjoying their gaming experiences. Hoffman and Nadelson (2010) found that "most interview participants indicated they approached gaming under the auspices of fun" (p. 260).

The concepts of challenge and competition were a common theme discovered during the individual interviews, the focus group discussion, and observed during the online gaming sessions. Online games are competitive in nature, as they are designed to have a winner and a loser, either individually or in a team setting. The idea of challenging oneself or another online gamer was thoroughly discussed by the

participants and all seemed to feel at one point or another that challenge was a major motivating factor to want to play FPS games, and to continue playing them. In fact, the participants talked about the challenge of levelling up, and one participant said "I'd rather work it up cuz that's part of the fun. Cuz I kinda lose interest once you max it out." Other studies indicate that challenge (Hoffman & Nadelson, 2010; Jansz & Tanis, 2007; Olson, 2010; Wan & Chiou, 2006; Yee, 2006) and competition (Demetrovics and colleagues, 2011; Jansz & Tanis, 2007; Olson, 2010; Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006, Yee, 2006) are significant motivating factors for gamers. According to the ESAC (2012), male gamers age 18-34 years who play online shooter games "play online to compete or play against others, cooperate or play team games with others and to collect trophies or achievements" (p.7).

Escapism is commonly discussed when talking about gamers' motives to play video games. Typically this has taken on a negative connotation, but talking with these participants shed some much needed light on the subject. The participants did talk about playing video games and escaping from reality; however, that wasn't the entire story. As with other activities in life, sometimes certain duties get cast aside in place of more favourable, fun activities. So after a stressful day at work, sometimes these participants like to sit back and play a few video games, while forgetting about the dishes, laundry, and other household chores, temporarily. The participants also shared many other activities they enjoy doing in their spare time, such as going to the gym, reading, playing guitar, sports, going to the lake, spending time with family/ friends, and watching TV. Overall, it seems that these

participants are able to manage their time spent on video games with other facets of life, while enjoying the escape from reality for awhile. Several other research studies found escapism to be a motivating factor for gamers, as well (Barnett et al., 1997; Demotrovics and colleagues, 2011; Hoffman & Nadelson, 2010; King, Delfabbro, & Griffiths, 2009; Olson, 2010; Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006, Wan & Chiou, 2006, Yee, 2006). Olthouse (2009) discussed the fantasy and escape element of playing video games and expressed that the realistic aspects in video games such as graphics and sound effects create a strong stimuli that immerse one in this fantasy environment that feels very real making it easy to escape reality.

There were some other motivating factors revealed in this research study that have not been in the findings of previous research. These included the following motivating factors: routine, boredom, engaging, winning, fitting in, camaraderie, and strategy/tactics. There could be a few different explanations as to why new motivating factors were uncovered in this study. First, this study looked specifically at the motivating factors to play FPS games, which may differ from the motivating factors to play other genres of video games, such as role playing, sports, or children's games. For example, the participants explained how there is a sense of camaraderie in FPS games when you play team-oriented games and work together to reach a common goal. However, in a game like Super Mario, the players work individually to complete a level so camaraderie may not be a relevant motivating factor.

As well, this study focused on online (live) game play, which may have different motivating factors than offline games. Online game play has increased over time with 76% of Canadian gamers playing online (ESAC, 2010). Some of the previous studies about gaming motivations date from 1997 to the present. Gaming motivations may change over time with other influencing changes in society and the video gaming industry, which could explain differing gaming motivations. For example, there has been a strong shift in using technology to communicate with other people through text, email, social media, and now through gaming platforms. Consequently, a motivating factor such as fitting in with one's peers might be discovered as more people are utilizing this technology in their day-to-day interactions with others.

This research study was a small, qualitative study with six participants. The other studies were quantitative; therefore, they had larger sample sizes. In talking with larger groups of people, it is possible that different motivating factors were revealed. For example, in a study conducted by Hoffamn and Nadelson (2010), 189 participants completed a self-report instrument, with a sub-set of 25 participants being interviewed further. The quantitative studies used different methods to collect their data. For example, in a study conducted by Jansz and Tanis (2007), the authors used an exploratory Internet survey to collect their data, which used a Likert-type scale where the participants rated their level of motivation on seven different components of motivation. The participants answered based on the options available. The open-ended nature of this research study may reveal different

motivations, as the participants had the opportunity to freely discuss their own motivations.

Social Conventions among Online Video Gamers

The study found a number of social conventions. These social conventions help create the culture of the online gaming community. Martey and Stromer-Galley (2007) indicate that "people exhibit normative behaviour in online environments" (p.314). Some of these conventions were basic rules in society that carry over to the online gaming community, such as using greetings and farewells when interacting with other people and using people's gamer tag names (names) to address other people online. A study conducted by Yee, Bailenson, Urbanek, Chang, and Merget (2007) found that "our social interactions in online virtual environments…are governed by the same social norms as social interactions in the physical world" (p.119). As well, online players use terminology common to gaming, specifically in FPS games, such as spawn and hacker. The culture of the online gaming community utilizes terminology that is relevant to its environment. It is true for people involved in certain activities to adopt certain related technology, such as a car enthusiast will use certain car-related words and expressions when talking with other car enthusiasts.

It was also observed during this study that certain types of online conversation were common-place. For example, swearing was heard repeatedly throughout the gaming sessions and this was discussed with the participants during the individual interviews and the focus group discussion. Given the setting,

it appears that the gamers accept this casual level of conversation. Since the online gamers are not privy to watching other gamers' body language and behaviours, they rely on verbal or written forms of communication, as these become the normative behaviours. Language acceptability varies depending on the location. For example, swearing in court would not be acceptable; however, swearing in a night club would be more common-place. The researcher observed that the online gaming environment has a very laid-back atmosphere in the sense of language and communication styles, but that there is still an expectation of acceptable gaming practices.

The acceptable gaming practices within the online gaming community include fair gaming practices such as following the written and unwritten rules and playing in an honest and just manner, skill appreciation, and respect for private property. "Fair play, which is an essential and central part of successful involvement, promotion, and development in both sport and life, can teach people tolerance and respect for others" (IFPC, 2015, The Essence of Fair Play section, para. 16). Playing fair and following these social conventions help create a more positive and successful gaming environment. "Fair play is capable of building a better society" (IFPC, 2015, Fair Society section, para. 1). Recognizing and appreciating the skills of fellow gamers is an important element to this online gaming community, as this may encourage fellow gamers to engage in behaviours that they want reciprocated to them while reinforcing these conventions. Having and expecting respect for one's private property in this virtual world is tantamount

to one's expectations in the real world. In fact, "recognition of virtual property in legislation and judicature has become a trend" (Xuan, 2015).

As for the controversial, unacceptable gaming strategies that some people choose to employ, it seems that only a small portion of gamers actually use these strategies. Overall, the opinion of the participants was that these controversial gaming strategies are a form of cheating, often become very frustrating when they are encountered during game play, and are lame techniques. For example, a player who decides to spawn trap other gamers gains an unfair point advantage, while spoiling the fun and sportsmanship of the game. The online players did not hesitate to express their dislike when another player utilized one of these techniques. During one gaming session, an online gamer expressed his frustration with another gamer camping out by mocking him with "I'd rather be the fucking best hunter in the zoo. All you guys have to use fishing poles, but me, I'm gonna fucking use dynamite." These controversial techniques should definitely be explored further in future research to gain a better understanding as to why some people use these techniques, what percentage of gamers use these techniques, and the demographics of these gamers.

How People Create and Learn Online Social Conventions

As with other social conventions, it is apparent that there are various avenues where people create and learn about these conventions. Some conventions carry over directly from other facets of life, such as using greetings when interacting with other people. However, other conventions need to be adapted from other

sources and then are modified to fit the situation better. This supports Carey's concept (2007) that when people are utilizing a new media form they will often borrow conventions from other sources and then modify them over time to fit their needs. Adapting, modifying, and creating these social conventions all help create the unique culture of the online gaming community. According to Human Ecology Theory, mutual influence and change are integral parts of the interactions people have with their environments, which are inevitable, as change in one part of this system will impact the other parts of the system. As part of this online gaming system, the social conventions will shift with these changes over time.

"Groups may adopt norms through a variety of ways. Norms can arise formally, where groups explicitly outline and implement behavioural expectations" (Wikipedia, 2014, Emergence and Transmission section, para. 1). Clans outline specific social conventions and rules that must be adhered to in order to join the group and maintain membership over time. A clan is an excellent example of a subculture that exists within the larger culture of the online gaming community. Clans outline very specific behaviours that are acceptable and since membership in the clan is completely voluntary, one must chose to strictly adhere to these in order to maintain membership. This research shows that people learn about the online social conventions in various ways, as in real life. According to Smith and Mackie (2007) "People often adopt the opinion of other group members and converge to social norms" (p. 310). As the participants explained, most learning about social conventions occurs through being exposed to them, first hand, in the environment.

"Norms are influenced by the environment in which players interact and are constructed primarily through the performance of actions and interactions by participants" (Martey & Stromer-Galley, 2007, p. 315). Human Ecology Theory supports the concept that norms are operating within this online gaming environment and are being impacted within this system by the online gamers. Gamers may blatantly be informed by other players that they are breaking the social conventions, or the players may just be subject to observing normative behaviours by putting themselves in the gaming environment and learning through trial and error and/or through direct observations. "While possible for newcomers to a group to change its norms, it is much more likely that the new individual will adopt the group's norms, values, and perceptions, rather than the other way around" (Wikipedia, 2014, Transfer of Norms Between Groups section, para. 2).

There are various consequences to breaking a social convention in online gaming. The consequences appear to vary depending on several factors. First, the type of infraction seems to have a bearing on the consequence. For instance, failing to greet a fellow gamer could elicit a different response than yelling hurtful racist comments at another gamer. Second, the people involved in the situation dictate the consequences of breaking a convention. For example, a player continuously cheats throughout the game. One fellow gamer chooses to just back out of the game and find another gaming lobby, while another gamer chooses to report the player who is cheating to Xbox Live. These two people encounter the same experience, but deal with the problem very differently. Third, players' moods during game play could

influence the consequences of breaking a social convention. Someone could be having a bad day or be losing every game and in a very bad mood, thus influencing their interactions with other online gamers. Their reaction could be nullified or intensified by their attitude that day.

The data showed that not all consequences are equal, as there can be many external influencing factors. Although some of the participants expressed being lenient on younger or inexperienced players, not everyone shared the same opinion. None of the participants expressed the desire to be mean to the younger or inexperienced players; however, the reactions for dealing with these players varied from engaging with these players to simply ignoring or muting the players to kicking them out of their gaming party. Online observations revealed varying reactions as well, from minor complaints to swearing and yelling at the young or inexperienced players.

How Motivation Influences the Social Conventions of the Online Gaming Community

Motivations to play online games vary greatly, from person to person, from day to day, and even from game to game, depending on the circumstances. "Players bring different styles, goals, habits, values, and temperaments to their gaming; their personalities influence their behaviour and thus the experiences of other players" (Bainbridge, 2010, p. 47.) The culture of the online gaming community shapes this environment, and helps define and modify the accepted norms and behaviours over time. Motivations to play online FPS games can have an impact on

the social conventions in the online gaming community. Players' own personal motivations influence their decisions to adhere to social conventions or to break them, which then can impact the social conventions – if they remain static or change over time. This idea is supported by Human Ecology Theory, as any changes in one part of this system could influence other sub-parts, or the entire system. For example, a player who is motivated by socialization values building positive relationships with the other players and decides it is important to adhere to the social conventions. This behaviour shows other players that the social conventions are being respected, which could influence their decisions to adhere to the conventions as well. This, in turn, could work to reinforce the existing social conventions.

People's motivations can influence the online social conventions. For example, people who form and join clans and rent servers set strict gaming rules that all members must adhere to and follow. People who do not follow these rules are promptly removed from the group. This greatly reduces the risk of having to deal with people who break the social conventions, often spoiling the fun and sportsmanship in the game. This reinforces the convention that fair play is the expected norm in this environment. "Fair play is not a theory. Fair play is an attitude that manifests itself in behaviour" (IFPC, 2015, Values for Life section, para. 1). The participants of this study indicated that a strong motivating factor to form or join a clan is to establish an environment of true competition. It also serves to re-enforce the social conventions, as it shows other gamers that they are able to

play on a level playing field, without cheating. According to Wikipedia (2014), "a clan or guild becomes like a family" (Clan section, para. 2). This would possibly explain the higher level of accountability the clan members would have towards one another, as the level of anonymity decreases. Williams and colleagues (as cited in Martey & Stromer-Galley, 2007) examined group or guild participation in World of Warcraft and found that people joined these groups because of the predominant norms and cultures in certain groups. It would appear that clans seek a strict online gaming culture where certain predictable behaviours are expected.

How Conventions of the Online Gaming Community Influence Gamers' Motivations to Play Online Games

Social conventions in the online gaming community have the potential to influence gamers' original motivations to play online games. One of the social conventions surrounding acceptable gaming practices involves fair game practice. For example, a gamer joins a clan and realizes that there are strict rules, including playing with honesty and in a just manner. The gamer's original motivation to play was to win; however, following the social conventions within this clan and belonging to this group created a shift in his motivations – to fitting in and socialization. In referring to social conventions, Carey (2007) shared that "they regulate behaviour for efficient and enjoyable social interactions" (p. 83). People then can expect certain behaviours and interactions within these environments. According to IFPC (2015) "Without fairness and trustworthiness the established order of our society is at risk" (The Essence of Fair Play section, para. 15).

Engaging in unacceptable social conventions in the online gaming community evoked strong reactions from other gamers, which often affected their original motivations to play. Why such strong reactions? Wang (2011) offers some insight "Behaving in ways the group considers appropriate is a way of demonstrating to others, and to oneself, that one belongs to the group" (Researchers Study What Gives Social Norms Their Power section, para. 4). Many online gamers, including the participants in this study, report that socialization is an essential element of online gaming. Socializing and being part of the group is another aspect of the culture of the online gaming community. In studies conducted by Spears, Lea, and Lee (1990) and Lea and Spears (1991), the authors compared computer mediated communication (CMC) with face-to-face interactions in performing the same task. They found "that the effects of CMC on group decision making processes could be varied depending on the extent to which participants thought of themselves as part of the group" (as cited in Hine, 2000, p.16). The gamers who are adhering to the social conventions may view the act of breaking a social convention as a sign that the rule breaker is acting like an outsider by not conforming. This would explain why most of the gamers adhere to the social conventions, the majority of the time.

Whenever there are some people who do not conform to the social conventions, there is some concern over the larger effect that this will have and what impact it will have on the community as a whole, as well as the culture of that community. Will the continuous observation of some gamers breaking certain online social conventions influence others in the gaming community over time? Prentice

and Miller (1993) conducted a study to examine the relationship between college students' own alcohol use and their perception of their peers alcohol use. The study found evidence of pluralistic ignorance, meaning the students overestimated the other students' alcohol use and found "male students shifted their attitudes over time in the direction of what they mistakenly believed to be the norm" (p. 243). This shows that the norm is at risk of shifting over time in response to a false perception. It is possible that gamers who observe others breaking conventions could perceive this as an acceptable gaming strategy, thereby shifting their own beliefs and the accepted convention over time. Wang (2011) says "observation of others' behaviours can also result in misperceptions of the norm, which in turn can cause the actual norm to shift" (Researchers Study What Gives Social Norms Their Power section, para.16).

Human Ecology Theory examines how changes in one part of a system affect and influence change in other parts of the system and collectively affect the system as a whole. People are continually changing and adapting over time, as is technology. Since the online gaming community does not operate in isolation and impacts the real world, there is concern about what impact the changes in online social conventions may have on society over time, and the social conventions in the real world. This study examined the impact and influence gamers' motivations and social conventions have on one another. There were observable short-term influences between these factors, while long-term impact would need to be studied

further in future research to determine what and how motivating factors and social conventions will shift in response to one another over time.

What Connections Exist Between this Online Virtual World and the Real Physical World?

Online theft is a real problem in the online gaming community; however, the repercussions carry over into the real world as the person has lost the money and time that they invested in the stolen items and/or more money and time is needed to replace the stolen items. The problem is that these digital items only exist in a virtual sense, where possession may be difficult to show. Cyberspace is difficult to monitor and police due to its immense size and worldwide access and laws covering virtual theft are not universal or even addressed in all countries. However, this is another example of how changes in technology lead to changes in society, as these issues need to be dealt with in order to prevent further theft. BBC News (2007) reported on a case where a Dutch teenager was charged for stealing virtual furniture bought with real money and explained "We have had much of this scamming going on in many countries but this is the first case where the police have taken legal action" (p. Virtual Theft section, para. 6). There are a few other cases where people have been convicted of virtual theft. In 2012, a Dutch youth was sentenced to 144 hours of community service after stealing another player's items in an online fantasy game (Belfast Telegraph, 2015). In 2014, a group of Chinese hackers were sentenced to two years in jail after acquiring World of Warcraft accounts illegally (Belfast Telegraph, 2015). One example of a gamer dealing with

the problem of virtual theft took a turn for the worse. In 2005, one Chinese gamer took his issue to police after his virtual sword was stolen by another gamer. The issue was not resolved as there is no law covering virtual theft in China. That Chinese gamer broke into the other gamer's house in the middle of the night, stabbed and killed the other gamer, and was later sentenced to life in prison (BBC News, 2005). It is important to recognize how online theft impacts people in the real world, as these two worlds are inter-related.

The concept of spending money versus time on acquiring virtual possessions was addressed during data collection. The participants talked about having the time to acquire or unlock certain features of the games versus spending money and unlocking these features instantly. The merit of both was discussed and it appears that both have potential importance depending on circumstances. The participants continued to talk about selling online gaming accounts for real money, as this meets some gamers' needs. The MMORPG called Entropia is unique in the sense that "it has its own virtual economy that has a fixed exchange rate to the real world" (Saenz, 2010, para. 1). The owner, Jon Jacobs had reportedly sold $650,000 worth of virtual property in this game and "many players invest their cash because they know that virtual objects have a resale value" (Saenz, 2010, para. 4). Virtual property exists in many facets of people's lives already, with digital pictures, email and text communications, and downloadable music and movies. These are all precise examples of how the items and activities from the virtual world carry over into people's real worlds. With this comes great potential, like the ability to earn

money, the ability to communicate quickly with others, and the convenience of having access to virtual objects from your home, office, or car. On the other side, there can be potential dangers, like theft, cyber bullying, miscommunication, and lost data. Saenz (2010) offers some valuable insight by saying "Maybe the real story here isn't how much a virtual property is selling for, but how much of our property is already virtual" (para. 7). The value and importance placed on virtual objects and places help formulate these online communities and the types of behaviours that are deemed acceptable.

The participants were asked about the impact of playing video games on their lives and if it is necessary for them to limit the time spent on video game play. The participants provided some very thought-provoking and personal answers. The answers varied widely, from providing a place to socialize with friends to interfering with interpersonal relationships with significant others. As well, in regards to limiting gaming time, answers ranged from having no issues to having to enforce strong boundaries. One study revealed both positive and negative effects of gaming on marital relationships – gaming together showed positive affect; however, lower marital satisfaction often involved "quarrelling about gaming, not retiring to bed at the same time, and addictive gaming behaviour" (Ahlstrom, Lundberg, Zabriskie, Eggett, & Lindsay, 2012, p.1). Three of the participants shared that gaming could interfere with the amount of time spent with their partner, and one participant shared that gaming has created a relationship breakdown for them in the past. Within this socio-cultural environment, a new relationship developed and carried

over into the real world, which impacted and changed these people. Other, more minor interferences in daily life were shared, such as avoiding chores or household tasks. These participants, as well as other gamers, make choices about what activities will occupy their leisure time, but need to be aware that the virtual world of online gaming has a direct impact on their lives in the real world.

As well, it was brought to the researcher's attention by one of the participants that people can and do form real in-person relationships after meeting in online gaming sessions. So even though the environment is anonymous in nature, people do have the option to share personal information over chat or through online messaging with other gamers. Social environments create opportunities for people to meet, from friendships, and even develop romantic relationships. In fact, a British couple married in 2009 after meeting in the virtual world Final Fantasy and falling in love, although both of them were in other relationships when they first met online (Squire, 2010). There are other examples of negative outcomes from meeting people through online gaming. In 2007, a toddler was beaten to death by her stepfather and mother, who had recently met playing the online game World of Warcraft ("Jurors Weep", 2009). In another situation, a 31-year-old woman was charged with child abduction after trying to bring her 17-year-old boyfriend with her, after meeting online in the World of Warcraft game and having an online relationship with him for over a year (Modine, 2007). There are examples of both positive and negative relationships developing from meeting through online gaming. Since these are real people playing these online games, the online gaming

environment provides another social space where relationships can begin to form. The boundaries of the virtual worlds of online gaming definitely overlap with the real physical world, and have an impact on people's daily lives and interactions. Virtual worlds are very much a part of people's everyday lives in the real physical world. This is evident when one considers the capabilities of smart phones, connections people have through social networking sites, and vehicle navigation systems, and how these are incorporated into our daily lives without even realizing the implications this may have on society.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research, there were limitations to the study. During one of the gaming sessions, there were some unexpected technical issues with the audio equipment, where the participant could not communicate with the other online gamers. It took awhile to resolve the issue, and unfortunately this interfered with the amount of data collected during this gaming session. All of the equipment had been tested ahead of time and other participants had successfully used it; however, some technical issues arose that day.

In this study, the sample was selected using purposive sampling, focusing on particular characteristics of participants to achieve a homogeneous sample. In selecting a homogeneous sample, some segments of the gaming population have not been represented in this study and the researcher recognizes that this is a limitation of this study.

Due to the small sample size (6) of the study, this research topic definitely needs to be explored further in future research. With only six participants, the data cannot be generalized to the general population, but provides a strong foundation for building future research projects. In choosing a qualitative research design, the researcher was aware of this limitation, but felt it was important to get to know the gamer on a more personal level. Although only six gamers participated in this study, the researcher had three data-rich sources for each participant which helps compensate for the small sample size. As well, this study focused on one specific genre of video game – first person shooter games. Studies focusing on other genres of video games may have different findings and implications for those findings.

Directives for Future Research, Policy, and Practice

The study's findings suggest many possibilities for future research. Future studies could explore the same research topics with different age cohorts, gender, genre of game, game platforms, and geographic locations to compare findings among these different categories. As well, a quantitative study could be designed to explore the same research study topics, but utilizing different data collection methods, on a larger scale. The social aspects of the online gaming community is relatively new to this field of research, and will need to be explored further in the future, in order to gain a better understanding of this increasingly popular pastime.

There were many interesting findings due to the open-ended nature of this qualitative study that would merit further inquiry and research. One particularly interesting topic was the idea of virtual theft, as people invest much time and/ or

money in these online social worlds. This includes online gaming, social networking sites, music downloads, and apps. Many different areas could be examined further, such as recovery of stolen items, safeguards in place to protect people, and the risks/ benefits of investing in virtual items. Another unexpected finding was the idea of people building in-person relationships after meeting in the online gaming community. This topic could be explored further to discover the types and durations of the relationships that are formed, risks/ benefits of sharing personal information with other online individuals, and the impact on other existing relationships. One other interesting area to explore in future research is the whole anonymous nature of the online gaming community and accountability to other gamers.

The findings of the study could be utilized by a group of people who are closely connected to these gamers and interact with them on a regular basis. Teachers and schools could use the information from the study to influence the current policies and teaching strategies in effect. They could capitalize on the opportunity to learn more about the students they teach, modify their teaching approaches to better suit the changing needs and interests of young males, and use this knowledge to better engage their students.

The findings in this study could influence future policies on Xbox and PlayStation platforms. There currently are rules set in place in order to control certain aspects of the online gaming community; however, these could be modified or new policies could be put in effect in order to deal with some of the current issues gamers experience in the online gaming community, such as spawn trapping or

boosting. As well, Xbox and/or PlayStation could develop new strategies to more effectively deal with important sensitive issues, such as the use of racist language by gamers in the online community.

The study findings could impact the practices of the video game designers and companies that develop video games; thereby influencing game play. For example, in order to help curb spawn trappers, the game could be re-designed to allow any player who re-spawns a 10 second buffer to allow them to move away from the spawn area and to re-integrate in the game. Since the popular FPS video games are revamped and released annually, there is opportunity to consider outside feedback, whatever the source, and incorporate new strategies within the game.

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Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Glossary of Terms

Clan   *a group of gamers who voluntarily play with the same group of gamers, adhering to game-play rules set by the group

Cyberspace   * the place where computer communications occur over an Internet connection; the environment where virtual objects exist

Exploratory Study   *a study that seeks to gain more knowledge about a problem where knowledge is limited

Facebook   *a social networking site where people create online profiles, add friends, family, & acquaintances to a friend's list, share photos and messages, and keep in touch via online communications

First Person Shooter   *a type of video game that involves the player shooting at some form of targets with a weapon, played through the eyes of the character

Gamer   *a person who has played video games in the last 4 weeks

Instagram   *a social networking site where people can share pictures and videos with other users and share them instantly on other social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook

Kill/Death	*In video games, the ratio of the number of kills the gamer gets to the number of times the gamer dies (ex. 12 kills, 4 deaths = a K/D of 3)
Level Up	*advancing to the next skill level; involves some benefit, such as access to new weapons, weapon accessories, etc.
Modding	*altering some aspect of the video game and/or equipment
Motivation	*the driving force that prompts a person to do something
Rank	*the level the gamer has gotten his/her character to in the video game (ex. Level 50 character vs. Level 80 character – rank is gained through game play experience)
Social Convention	*a group of culturally acceptable norms that guide people's actions and interactions with others
Video Game Community	*a group of people that share a common interest and space - playing video games
Virtual	*something that does not exist in the physical world, but is created and stored in cyberspace
Virtual World	*an online environment created through an Internet connection or other computer network; people engage in this space as there is an expectation of certain activities and/or interactions with others
Xbox Live	*the online gaming service provided by Microsoft required to play online games

Appendix B – List of Acronyms

List of Acronyms

COD   Call of Duty

CTF   Capture the Flag

ESAC   Entertainment Software Association of Canada

FPS   First Person Shooter

HQ   Headquarters

K/D   Kill/Death

MMORPGs   Massively-Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games

MOD   Modifications

MOGQ   Motives for Online Gaming Questionnaire

MW3   Modern Warfare 3

PS3   Play Station 3

REB   Research Ethics Board

SMG   Sub Machine Gun

SND   Search & Destroy

TDM   Team Death Match

VW   Virtual World

Appendix C – Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title:

Motivations and Social Conventions of Online Video Game Play among Young, Adult Males

Principal Investigator and Contact Information:

Bonnie Land, Graduate Student

Faculty of Human Ecology, University of Manitoba

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This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask me. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Study Details

This research project is exploring what compels young, adult males to play online video games, to learn about the social conventions or common behaviours in the online gaming community, and to discover if there is a link between the gamers' motives and online behaviours. This research is important because video games are a major part in people's everyday lives, either personally or through friends, relatives, or acquaintances. This research can help inform people about what really happens in the video gaming community and can be used as a tool to help others connect with gamers on a personal level.

This study will be done in three phases, with each phase being carried out on separate occasions. In phase one, you will either be assigned to participate in the study as a single gamer or in a dyad. You will play the game(s) *Halo: Reach and/or Modern Warfare: 3* over a two to three hour block of time. You will be videotaped during game play. In phase two, you will participate in an individual interview, for approximately 30 minutes to one hour. The interviews will be audio recorded. In phase three, you will participate in a focus group, with all study participants present, for approximately one to two hours. The focus group discussions will be audio recorded. The total estimated time of your involvement in the study is about 4-6 hours.

As part of the study, you will receive the benefit of being able to play video games, an activity in which you already engage in and enjoy. As well, you will be able to voice your opinions during the interview and focus group sessions. This will allow you the opportunity to share your knowledge and insights with other gamers and society.

During game play, there is the possibility that other online gamers could precipitate inappropriate verbal dialogue or send inappropriate messages to you. You are being advised of this potential risk and can mute other gamers or leave the games if others become verbally abusive. Since you will be playing on my account, the written messages will be directed to my account, so you will not be subjected to any of these messages.

The data collected will not be anonymous, but will remain confidential. The researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information that is collected. Until completion of the thesis, the video and audio recordings and any written documents will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home, in order to protect the identity of all the participants and to maintain confidentiality. Any electronic documents will be stored on the researcher's laptop and password protected. No identifying information will be stored within the written transcripts.

As a thank you for participating in the study, you will be provided with a credit in the form of $50 cash, which will be distributed at the end of the focus group session.

You may withdraw from the study at any time, without any negative consequences. The researcher asks that you inform her either by phone or email of your intention to withdraw from the study. As well, you may inform the researcher in person of your intention to withdraw during the gaming session, the interview, or focus group session.

At the focus group session, you will be provided with a brief summary of the data collected for review, to ensure that the researcher's interpretations are accurate.

The research results will be disseminated as a Master's thesis, and potentially in the form of conference presentations and/or a journal article.

You will be provided with a brief 1-3 page summary of results of the study in February 2013. You will be asked if you would prefer this document be sent to you by email or mail.

The confidential data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Manitoba in Dr. Javier Mignone's office and any electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer, for a period of three years following the completion of the thesis. After this time period, the confidential data will be rendered anonymous as the electronic data will be erased and the coding legend will be shredded and disposed of in a timely manner. The written transcripts will then contain only anonymous data and can be kept indefinitely.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact Dr. Javier Mignone by phone at 474- 8065 or by email at mignonej@cc.umanitoba.ca, or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

_____

How do you want the study summary sent to you:

- o By Email: _____or
- o By Mail: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D – Individual Interview Questions

Individual Interview

General Information:

Gender:

Age:

Gaming System Played:

Game Chosen:

Ethnic Background:

Employment/ Student Status:

Education:

Questions/ Topics

1. How does online play differ from regular game play? Which do you prefer? Why?

On average, how much time do you spend on each? (In a week, month?)

2. What motivates you to play *online* video games? Are these different motives from

regular game play? Is different satisfaction derived from online game play?

3. What types of video games do you play? Name some examples.

4. What motivates you to play *first person shooter* video games? Why do you play

FPS games?

5. Specifically, why do you play *online FPS* games?

6. Describe how you feel when you play video games.

7. Group Play vs. Solo Play: How is the video game experience different when you

play as a group? (With known friends, either in the same room or online vs. with

unknown online gamers.)

8. Conversation: Describe the conversation that occurs while playing online games?

9. Social Skills: Is chatting/socializing important to online play? Is a different/ new type of social skill or trend needed/ developed from interacting through technology?

10. Good Sportsmanship: What role does this play? For example: swearing, new, inexperienced players. How are others judged?

11. Do you feel that you are influenced by your social interactions with other during game play? How? Does this influence your game play? In what ways?

12. What are some other activities you enjoy doing? What impact does video game play have on other activities in life: Work, school, friends, daily living tasks, girlfriend/ boyfriend, family? Do you limit the amount of time spent on video games?

Appendix E – Focus Group Questions

Focus Group

Motivations

1. Why do you play first person shooter games online? What impact do other people have on your motivations during game play?

2. Is socializing during game play important? Why or why not?

3. If the social element of online gaming a major part of the experience? How? Why or why not? How would the game be different if online conversations were eliminated completely?

Social Conventions

4. Social conventions are the explicit, unwritten rules of behaviour in social situations. A social convention is an unwritten law of custom, commonly adhered to in a society. A convention is a selection from among two or more alternatives, where the rule or alternative is agreed upon among participants. Often it refers to unwritten customs shared throughout a community. Examples: Hand shaking, turn taking in conversation, saying goodbye when leaving a conversation, saying a prayer before a meal, signing your name at the end of a letter, etc.
When playing online, are there certain rules or behaviours that are expected or classified as "normal"? What are they? How do people create and learn about these rules for their behaviour?

5. What happens if someone breaks these rules? Does the consequence vary with age, gender, and experience level??

6. Scenario One: You decide to go online to play because you want to level up. During game play, a group of guys is camping out together and keep killing you with an unfair advantage of 4 on 1. A social convention in the online gaming community is: camping out is not acceptable. Now, because someone is breaking a social norm in the online gaming community, your motivation to play shifts from achievement in the game to regaining power and taking control of the situation.

Do these "rules" or expectations influence your decision to play online and influence why and how you play?

Scenario Two: A social convention in the online gaming community is: cheating is not acceptable – specifically, you play with a friend; they allow you to continuously kill them in order to get a great k/d ratio and to achieve accomplishments, such as kill streaks. You buy a new game and you go online because you want to level up. Your motivation is to gain status in the game. You want to do this quickly and although you know cheating is not acceptable in the online gaming community, you and a friend decide to take turns killing one another in order to level up quicker.

Will this impact the accepted social conventions? Will certain types of cheating become acceptable if enough people start doing it?
On the flip side, how do your own motivations influence the social conventions of the online gaming community?

Appendix F – Ethics Approval Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | **Research Ethics and Compliance**
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

August 23, 2012

TO:	**Bonnie Land** Principal Investigator	(Advisor J. Mignone)
FROM:	**Wayne Taylor, Chair** Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)	
Re:	**Protocol #J2012:101** **"Motivations and Social Conventions of Online Game Play among Young Adult Males"**	

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). **This approval is valid for one year only**.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

> Please note:
>
> - If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services, fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency and your UM Project number. **This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.**
>
> - if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

> The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

umanitoba.ca/research/orec